NEWAR SOCIETY

City, Village and Periphery

Gérard Toffin

NEWAR SOCIETY

NEWAR SOCIETY

City, Village and Periphery

Gérard Toffin

सीशल साइन्स बहाः
SOCIAL SCIENCE BAHA

Himal Books

Front cover: Jyāpu women from Kirtipur playing the transverse flute *baṃsurī* made out of turned wood (March 2005). Until some years back, Newar women were barred from playing such musical instruments. **Back cover:** Ranjitkār girls at their *ihi* ceremony near Nardevi Temple, Kathmandu.

All photographs by the author except the front cover by Lubomira Palikarska.

© 2007, Gérard Toffin

Cover design: Bilash Rai
Typesetting and layout: Chiran Ghimire

ISBN 978 99933 43 86 8

Published for the Social Science Baha by Himal Books

Social Science Baha
PO Box 166, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-5548142 • Fax: +977-1-5541196
email: baha@soscbaha.org
www.soscbaha.org

Himal Books
PO Box 166, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-5542544 • Fax: +977-1-5541196
email: books@himalassociation.org
www.himalassociation.org/books

Printed in Nepal

Rs 790

305.85496
T571N

ACC NO
180415

Publisher's Note

Social Science Baha takes pride in publishing Professor Gérard Toffin's *Newar Society*. This collection of monographic papers were mostly written in French and published in diverse books and journals. This publication thus makes a substantial portion of Toffin's scholarship more readily available to English readers.

Newar Society is one of the most comprehensive ethnographic studies of Newar society. Spanning over 35 years of anthropological research, the chapters in this book display a deep empirical and theoretical understanding of the Newar, both rural and urban, high castes (Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs) and artisan castes (Citrakārs), paradigmatic castes like the Maharjan (Jyāpū), and groups on the periphery of Newar society such as the Pahari and the Balāmī. The book offers imaginative insights on some major elements of Newar society such as kinship, caste, *guthi* and other social and territorial organisations as well as of changes in Newar identities and gender relations in response to local, national and international processes.

Written clearly with a typical French flavour and not overloaded with scholarly jargon, this book will certainly be very useful to the Newar themselves to help them understand their own society differently, if not better. It will also prove extremely informative to non-Newars in understanding one of the most ancient, complex and fascinating social groups of Nepal.

Acknowledgements

This book synthesises some of my findings from fieldwork undertaken in the Kathmandu Valley since 1970. My work took me to the villages of Pyangaon and Theco, the old neighbourhoods of Kathmandu and Lalitpur, Panauti and many other places. In particular, I worked among Maharjans, Chatharīyās, Rājopādhyāyas, Śākyas, Citrakārs, Mānandhars, Putuwārs, Balāmis, and Paharis. While preparing this volume, I often thought of my many friends in these communities, and I am indebted to all the people who welcomed me and answered my endless questions with generosity and patience.

Chapter 1 has been translated from the original French by Declan Quigley, Chapter 2 by David Gellner. I would like to express my gratitude to both here. I also owe a special thanks to Bernadette Sellers (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Villejuif) for revising the English in Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13, and in the introduction. Mrs Sellers also prepared a first draft for the translation of Chapter 10. March Anspach revised Chapter 3, and David Phelps (Oxford) Chapters 6, 9, 10 and 12. Himali Dixit revised some chapters in Kathmandu.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Krishna Prasad Rimal of Pako, Kathmandu, who worked as my research assistant on several occasions and from whose broad experience I have learnt a lot. In addition, I benefitted from the help of Ram Panday, Mahesh Pant,

Keshab Raj Bhandari, the late Punya Ratna Vajracharya, Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Anita Maharjan, Madhav Maharjan, Vincent Barré and Sarkiman Majhi, at various points in my research, either in Paris or in Nepal. In Kathmandu, warm thanks go to Bernadette Vasseux, whose continuous friendship and goodwill over the last four decades have been important to me in many ways. Other, specific debts are listed in the beginning of some chapters.

I express my gratitude to the publishers of the journals and books in which most of the articles in this present volume first appeared for permission to reprint them. I am grateful to the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Kirtipur, for having encouraged my research over the years. I must also thank everyone at the Social Science Baha and Himal Association, Lalitpur, for their kindness, encouragement and technical help in the process of editing the book. Special thanks are due to Rajendra Pradhan, Deepak Thapa, Himali Dixit and Prabina Manandhar. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Paris, for their assistance over the years. Corneille Jest, Marc Gaborieau, Lucette Boulnois, Pierrette Massonnet, and Philippe Ramirez, in particular, must be mentioned in this regard. Last, but not least, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Christine, my wife, who showed great patience during the periods of research.

Notes on Conventions and Transliteration

In this book I adopt the same conventions for the spelling and transliteration of Nepali and Newar words as used by R.L. Turner and T. Manandhar in their dictionaries. The only exception is the Indological *v*, which is here transliterated *w*, to follow the spelling adopted by Thakur Lal Manandhar (1986), except in the case of words that are clearly derived from the Sanskrit.

In western academic usage, the language spoken by the Newar was traditionally called Newari. Here, I follow the recent usage agreed upon in Nepal: Newar instead of Newari. To check the orthography of Newar words, I used, besides Manandhar's Newar-English dictionary, the one by Shresthacarya and Ulrike Kölver (1999), as well as the classical Newār dictionary published in 2000 by Cwasā Pasā. Unfortunately, a number of vernacular words collected among Balāmis and Paharis, as well as in the village of Pyangaon, could not be verified in lexical lists; dictionaries of Newar dialects are as yet non-existent.

For the sake of simplicity, I do not capitalise the English translations of caste names. I feel that this western convention would seem out of place in the current egalitarian context. The names of castes are given here indifferently in their colloquial Newar and honorific forms. The first time each word appears, however, the form used is specified.

Geographical and place names appear here in a simplified, common,

non-transliterated form—with the exception of some Newar place names of interest. In the same way, diacritics have been omitted from personal names, and from the names of well-known families and kings. The months of the year are referred to by their Sanskritised names, which carry a deep meaning in classical Newar culture.

For the orthography of Nepali words, I follow Turner's Nepali-English dictionary (1931); and for Sanskrit words, the dictionary by Monier-Williams (1970). Italicised words are, unless otherwise indicated, Newar. As far as abbreviations are concerned, New. indicates Newar; Nep. Nepali; Pah. Pahari; and Skt. Sanskrit. BS means Bikram Sambat, the current national calendar that begins roughly 57 years before the Common Era.

Contents

	Publisher's Note	v
	Acknowledgements	vii
	Notes on Conventions and Transliteration	ix
	Introduction	1
1	The Citrakār: Caste of painters and mask-makers	22
2	The Social Organisation of Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs	49
3	The Farmers in the City: The social and territorial organisation of the Maharjan (Jyāpu) of Kathmandu	75
4.	A Secret Village: Social control and religion among the Swīgumi	120
5.	Inter-Caste Relationships in and around a Newar Village	163
6.	Territory, Death and Local Deities: The socio-religious structure of Maharjan villages	190
7.	The Balāmi Wood-Cutters and Sellers: Caste or ethnic group?	212
8.	A Peripheral Group on the Rim of the Kathmandu Valley: The Pahari	242
9.	From Kin to Caste: The Role of *guthi* in Newar society and culture	289
10.	The Mwaḥni (Dasaī) Festival and the Caste System	316
11.	Funeral Priests and the Meaning of Caste	339
12.	Constructing Identity in a Changing Context: The Jyāpu Mahāguthi	359
13.	Gender and Social Change: Contesting the masculinity of musical instruments	384
	Bibliography	409
	Index	424

Figures

Fig. 1. Map of the Kathmandu Valley following xiv
Fig. 2. The three categories of agnatic kin with the three corresponding levels of patrilineal affiliation among Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs 61
Fig. 3. Kathmandu city 102
Fig. 4. Number of Maharjan households by quarter, *twāḥ*, in Kathmandu, 1992 109
Fig. 5. Approximate location of Maharjan *twāḥ* in Kathmandu city, 1992 111
Fig. 6. The village of Pyangaon 124
Fig. 7. Basketry (Pyangaon) (sketch by Vincent Barré) 128
Fig. 8. Main Balāmi villages 217
Fig. 9. Distribution of main Pahari villages in the Kathmandu Valley 246

The idea of convergence seems to present no more difficulty to the architect than to the philologist (...). In sociology, on the other hand, practical experience and theoretic study usually are divorced; the sociologist seldom is a statesman or administrator as well. Social changes, therefore, appear to him as automatic processes, like a stream flowing downhill, not as the constant effort of different races with different traditions to overcome the same obstacles. If, instead of keeping anthropology and European history in watertight compartments, we interpreted the one in the light of the other, the convergence of customs would present no difficulty to the mind (...). The result is to bring together those things which are historically unconnected and keep apart those which are closely related.

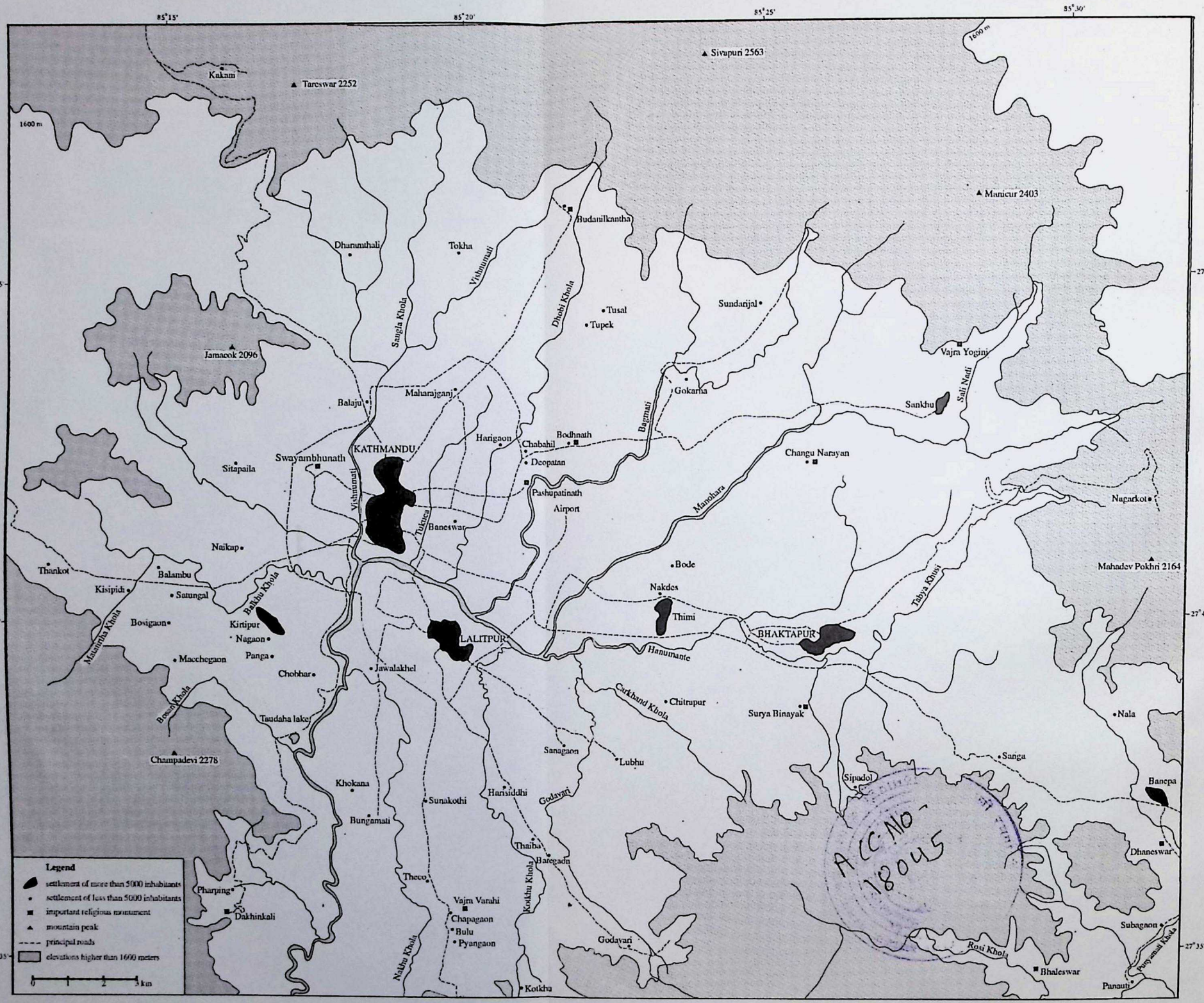
Arthur Maurice Hocart
'The Convergence of Customs', *Folk-lore*, 1923

Figures

Fig. 1. Map of the Kathmandu Valley following xiv
Fig. 2. The three categories of agnatic kin with the three corresponding levels of patrilineal affiliation among Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs 61
Fig. 3. Kathmandu city 102
Fig. 4. Number of Maharjan households by quarter, *twāḥ*, in Kathmandu, 1992 109
Fig. 5. Approximate location of Maharjan *twāḥ* in Kathmandu city, 1992 111
Fig. 6. The village of Pyangaon 124
Fig. 7. Basketry (Pyangaon) (sketch by Vincent Barré) 128
Fig. 8. Main Balāmi villages 217
Fig. 9. Distribution of main Pahari villages in the Kathmandu Valley 246

The idea of convergence seems to present no more difficulty to the architect than to the philologist (...). In sociology, on the other hand, practical experience and theoretic study usually are divorced; the sociologist seldom is a statesman or administrator as well. Social changes, therefore, appear to him as automatic processes, like a stream flowing downhill, not as the constant effort of different races with different traditions to overcome the same obstacles. If, instead of keeping anthropology and European history in watertight compartments, we interpreted the one in the light of the other, the convergence of customs would present no difficulty to the mind (...). The result is to bring together those things which are historically unconnected and keep apart those which are closely related.

Arthur Maurice Hocart
'The Convergence of Customs', *Folk-lore*, 1923



ACC NO- 18045

Fig. 1. **Map of the Kathmandu Valley (1982)**

27°45'
i 2164
27°40'
anepa
swar
27°35'

Introduction

When I started studying the Newar[1] of the Kathmandu Valley in 1970, we were only a handful of foreign scholars focusing on the subject. Hiroshi Ishii, an anthropologist from Japan, was carrying out his field-work in the village of Satungal, not far from Kirtipur. Bernhard Kölver and Niels Gutschow arrived in Nepal at about the same time as I did and selected Bhaktapur, a conspicuously Hindu city, as the base for their textual and architectural studies. Theodore Riccardi, a Sanskritist from Columbia University, occasionally came to Nepal for short periods; he was mainly concerned with the history and archaeology of the Kathmandu Valley. Father John Locke, a Jesuit missionary attached to St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel, had been interested in Newar Buddhism and particularly in the cult of the deity Rāto Matsyendranāth for a long time.

1 According to the 2001 census, the population of Newars (Newāḥ in the Newar language, Newāḥpīṃ in the plural form) in Nepal numbered 1,245,000, i.e., 5.5 per cent of the total population. The Newar no longer constitute the majority within the Kathmandu Valley, which has been the destination of a great number of migrants over the last few decades. In addition, it is worth noting that many Newars have left the Kathmandu Valley over the centuries and have long lived in other parts of Nepal, especially in towns that are marketplaces, to the east, the west and the south: Dolakha, Tansen, Pokhara, Bandipur, Nuwakot-Trisuli, Bhairahawa, Dhading District, and so on. Some Newars also live in Tibet (Lhasa, Shigatse), Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dehradun, and other parts of North India. This diaspora will not be dealt with in the present book.

And, finally, Michael Allen, a social anthropologist from the University of Sydney, himself devoted to Newar Buddhism, chose to study the living goddess Kumārī in 1973. That was about all of us, or nearly all.

I actually chose to do research on the Newar after reading the book, *The Newars*, by Gopal Singh Nepali, who was teaching anthropology at the Department of Sociology in Benares Hindu University, Varanasi, in the 1970s. I was fascinated by the lavish and outstanding culture of the Newar, the exuberance of their religion and rituals and the extraordinary complexity of their society, based not only on kinship, but also on the caste system and a specific type of multifarious association called *guthi* that forms the framework for organising numerous ritual activities. Newars, the principal inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, are sometimes considered the indigenous people of this region. They clearly belong to the Indic mainstream, but at the same time exhibit a clearly distinctive and unique culture. The uniqueness of this brilliant tradition was a legitimate object of curiosity, but also a challenging issue in the study of the overall process of Indianisation on the southern slopes of the Himalaya. How could the distinctiveness of this culture be explained when compared, for instance, with the Nepali-speaking Parbatiyā Hindu castes (called *khaymta* by the Newar) who form Nepal's largest population group and exemplify another branch of the Himalayan country's civilisation?

All this raised a number of questions. Surprisingly, in those early days, Newars were less known, anthropologically speaking, than many of the Nepali ethnic groups from the hills, such as the Gurung, Sherpa or Rai. Nobody, for instance, had worked among the caste of Newar farmers called Jyāpu, the largest group among the Newar and to some extent the backbone of Newar society. Another reason to explain my resolve was the fact that I had been appointed to the French Embassy, in Lazimpat, Kathmandu, and on a part-time basis to the Darbar School at Rani Pokhari for the sixteen months to come. Since communication with the other regions of Nepal was quite difficult at the time, I was in some ways trapped. I had little opportunity to trek in the hills to be able to get close enough to any other group living outside the Kathmandu Valley.

A large number of scholars have since carried out research among the Newar. Restricting ourselves to anthropological studies alone, we may mention Anne Vergati, Axel Michaels, David Gellner, Declan Quigley, the late Robert Levi, Todd Lewis, Linda Iltis, Bruce Owens, and in recent times the late A.W. van den Hoek. Some Newar anthropologists them-

selves have studied Newar culture, such as Rajendra Pradhan in his study of Kathmandu city, and Bal Gopal Shrestha on the subject of the Sankhu township and Newar diasporas.[2] Starting in the 1990s and into the present, a new generation of young anthropologists, mostly foreigners, has begun research on this old Kathmandu Valley ethnic group from various new viewpoints. Academic interest in this population has in fact grown exponentially in recent years. We now have many studies on the Newar, ranging from ethnomusicology to architecture and art, although their ancient literature and religious texts have not yet received enough coverage.[3] Most of this research relates to Newar culture in its broader sense. Religion in the Kathmandu Valley, in particular, has fascinated a number of foreign scholars, probably because of its conservative and archaic aspects compared to religion in contemporary India.

As for social organisation itself—that is, kinship, the system of marriage, lineage organisation, power distribution among kin groups, *guthi* associations, territorially-based institutions, and the world of caste—I published a large volume entitled *Société et religion chez les Néwars du Népal* in 1984. This book is based mainly on my fieldwork in the village of Pyangaon and the small city of Panauti. However, it was written in French, and thus not readily accessible to a large number of people. *Contested Hierarchies* (1995), the collective volume edited by David Gellner and Declan Quigley, to which I contributed two chapters, was a further important piece of work in the study of Newar society, stressing particularly its diversity and discussing some of my own theses. But much remains to be said on these subjects from a perspective other than the one adopted in that collective work. It also has to be noted that little attempt has since been made to bring together additional material on the agricultural castes and other groups that were not sufficiently covered in that book or which are so far quite unknown academically.

Presentation of the book

The suggestion of bringing together a selection of my articles in a single volume and in English originally came from my friend and colleague

2 One should mention also Sushila Manandhar (Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Kirtipur) and Anil Shakya.

3 On classical Newar, the older form of the language used in the manuscripts, as opposed to colloquial contemporary Newar, see Malla (1982) and Lienhard and Manandhar (1988). The earliest dated inscription in classical Newar is dated 1173 CE and the earliest authentically dated manuscript in this language is *Mānavanyāyaśāstra*, 1380 CE (Malla 1982: 2).

Rajendra Pradhan of the Social Science Baha in Lalitpur. I quickly consented on the obvious grounds that it would be useful to present some of my writings in English for those who cannot read French. For the reasons underlined above, I decided to restrict the scope of such a book to Newar society and its constituents. I do believe that the material presented here provides a better understanding of the social system of this population. I particularly have in mind the *guthi* associations, the ceremonial aspects of the caste system, the links between centre and periphery, and Jyāpu farmer institutions, which will be dealt with at length in the following pages. Naturally, some aspects of religion will be investigated in this book, since ceremonial life holds a major significance for the Newar social order. To put it in quite simple terms, among the Newar, the profane cannot be completely dissociated from the sacred: the two spheres are intimately connected. In the future, however, I intend to devote a second collection of my works to the meanings and structure of the extremely exuberant rituals of the Newar, which, in many ways, have a logic all of their own.

The following thirteen chapters have been organised to illustrate the itinerary my research has taken, but in an order that is not chronological. Chronologically, I began by studying, during my spare time, the very introverted Newar village of Pyangaon, located near Chapagaon in Lalitpur District, in the southern part of the Kathmandu Valley. That was in 1970. The late Khem Bahadur Bista, who was teaching Nepali at the Oriental Languages Institute of the University of Paris at the time, had introduced me to the locality. For eight months (from September 1971 to April 1972), I was immersed in the daily life of this community, sleeping on the floor and eating with other members of the household in which I lived. Because of the difficulty the villagers had in pronouncing my first name, I was called Jilal. Two chapters of this book (4 and 5) are devoted to the social organisation of this extremely interesting mono-caste community and to its links with the surrounding castes. Afterwards, I undertook research on the Pahari (Chapter 8) and the Balāmi (Chapter 7), with whom the Newar farmers of Pyangaon are connected in one way or another. These two small population groups live on the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley and sociologically stand between the categories of caste and ethnic groups.

In 1976, after several more visits to Pyangaon for verification and updating of material, I launched a second major sequence of fieldwork, this time in an urban context. Under the auspices of John Sanday (UNESCO)

and Corneille Jest (CNRS), I decided to study the small town of Panauti in Banepa Valley, adjacent to the Kathmandu Valley basin. I stayed a long time in this pleasant, multi-caste locality bordered by two rivers, and studied the architecture, the caste system, ceremonial life and the local economy. At the time of my study, the inhabitants of Panauti numbered about 3,000, not too large a population to carry out an insightful and comprehensive survey of the 20 castes living in the city. Two chapters (10 and 11) that deal with the symbolic basis of the caste system rely on materials collected in this small trading centre.

In subsequent years, I did much research in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, the three main cities of the Valley, focusing on some specific castes: the Citrakār painters and mask-makers (Chapter 1); the Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ priests, who, interestingly enough, often prefer not to consider themselves Newar (Chapter 2); and the Rañjitkār printers and dyers. I also carried out fieldwork in the village of Theco in Lalitpur District, collecting comparative material on Jyāpu farmers to figure out whether or not Pyangaon was a totally unique village. I have become convinced that though it is to some extent atypical, Pyangaon is not set off from other rural localities of the region in any marked degree as far as social structure, religion and economic life are concerned.

In 1990, I started my last major sequence of fieldwork among the Newar, with the Jyāpu farmers of the old quarters of the city of Kathmandu. Interestingly, among this group, I discovered a thoroughly fascinating system of social and territorial organisation, based to a large extent on ceremonial music, drums and cymbals, as well as on a mysterious god of music, Nāsaḥdyaḥ. I sometimes regret not having begun my research with this group since it would perhaps have been more profitable for me to have started with these farmers instead of settling in a very uncomfortable village far from Kathmandu, whose inhabitants spoke a different Newar from the one I had learnt in Kathmandu. In either case, though, there would have been similar difficulties: Jyāpu farmers of that time—the end of king Mahendra's (1920-1972) rule—were nearly everywhere extremely reclusive and secretive, having little contact with foreigners. This was as true in Kathmandu as it was in Pyangaon. Unfortunately, the large amount of material I collected among these urban farmers has to date not been published. A sample of it is presented in Chapter 4 of this book as well as in part of Chapter 12. To put an end to this long programme of research, spanning more than 35 years and including nearly five years of fieldwork in the Kathmandu and Banepa valleys (besides my research

among the western Tamangs and in Gulmi-Arghakhanchi), in 1998, I decided to start studying the remarkable changes that have been affecting Newar society as a whole over the last three decades. This research took the form of extensive day-long visits to numerous localities, mainly rural, all over the Kathmandu Valley. Some of the results of this ongoing project are presented here for the first time in Chapters 12 and 13.

The sequence in which the chapters have been ordered in this book inverts this chronology in a fundamental way. I have elected to open *Newar Society* with the three urban case studies assembled here (Citrakār, Rājopādhyāya and Jyāpu of Kathmandu), instead of beginning with the rural Jyāpu. My purpose in doing this is to start off with the centres, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, the three cities that were the capitals of the Malla kingdoms from 1620 to 1768-9, and that remain up to present times the chief urban nuclei of the Kathmandu Valley. In other words, I decided to deal first with the core of Newar society, the cities where intellectual, political and artistic resources have always been chiefly located; then to move out to the country, to the Jyāpu villages which were formerly encompassed by one or another of these political centres; and finally to the outlying areas, the edges of the Kathmandu Valley, so far neglected by scholarship but which, I believe, should be of obvious interest to anyone seeking to understand the whole system. These three circles constitute important points of reference. By considering its periphery, this book introduces a new perspective on Newar society, one thus far ignored. For reasons that will shortly become clear, there were logical and theoretical advantages to organising the book along these lines. As for the last two chapters, which draw on some of my work on the recent changes, they concern both rural and urban areas.

When read as a whole, the chapters of this book, in my mind, present an overall picture of some of the essential features of Newar society. It is important to underline that most of the papers that have been grouped together here have been revised and updated for the present volume. Much additional material has been incorporated into the original papers in Chapters 4 and 5 (on Pyangaon village) and Chapter 6 (on the Pahari). Chapters 6, 7 (on the Balāmi), 12 and 13, i.e., a third of the book have never been published before.

A complex society

The above-mentioned book by Gopal Singh Nepali (1965) has clearly contributed to our knowledge of the Newar in a decisive manner. How-

ever, it has at least two major drawbacks. Firstly, it presents this population as a homogeneous and uniform group, while in fact it is highly heterogeneous and its society and culture extremely diverse. We know that most of the material was collected in the village of Panga, near Kirtipur; but this monographic bias is never explicitly stated. What is more, it is often mixed with data collected in Kathmandu city and elsewhere. The outcome is highly confusing, both methodologically and sociologically. The second shortcoming of *The Newars* is that it presents this group through the paradigm of the-now-obsolete ethnic studies. The reference population is studied as a self-contained, irreducible group isolated and cut off, for instance, from the Parbatiyā (from the Nepali *parbat*, 'hill'), who have exerted enormous influence on the Newar since the 18th century, and especially on the large Śreṣṭha caste of traders, shopkeepers, clerks and civil servants, who tend to imitate the customs of the Parbatiyā. Moreover, G.S. Nepali considered the Newar as existing outside the larger political and nation-state context in which they have played an important role for a long time.

In fact, the Newar are a highly complex society, which cannot be reduced to the homogenised and somewhat schematic presentation formulated by G.S. Nepali. Though its members speak a Tibeto-Burman language, Newar[4] or *newāḥ bhāy*, this ethnic group cannot be considered a tribe, divided into segmentary groups more or less identical to each other. They consist of more than 30 main caste groups hierarchically arranged along lines structured upon criteria of pure and impure. In this respect, they stand in strong contrast to the other Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnic groups of Nepal, which are much more rustic in their economy, and more egalitarian in their spirit, even if some Hindu hierarchical dispositions have been adopted and integrated into their various societies. What is more, some Newar castes are Buddhist and profess Vajrayāna, a Tantric form of Buddhism, whereas others—the majority, in fact—are Hindu and call upon Brāhmaṇs to perform their religious ceremonies. This dual dimension of the Newar caste system, with contradictory internal tensions with regard to hierarchy, is a specific feature of this society. The two different religious traditions have coexisted and interacted with each other for the past two millennia. Such syncretism enhances the complexity of the whole framework. Indeed, for many castes— Jyāpus, for instance—it is difficult to assign a rigid religious

4 As indicated in the first pages of the book, Newar (language) stands here for Newari.

identity ('Hindu' or 'Buddhist') to its members.

In addition, Newar society is markedly urban in character. Involvement in trade has been a distinctive feature of the Newar since the very beginning of their history, and a great part of their population has lived for a long time in cities. Modern Newar society was largely shaped during the late Middle Ages—that is, the 17th to the 18th centuries—at a time when the Kathmandu Valley, originally called Nepāḥ Valley, was divided into three separate kingdoms ruled by the Malla kings. These rulers—who have nothing to do with the Malla dynasty of the far west (12th-14th centuries) and who belonged to the Khas culture—were themselves incorporated into the Newar caste hierarchy and spoke Newar as their mother tongue. As will be explained later on, the caste system was primarily structured around these kings and their local representatives in small towns and cities. These syncretic Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms disappeared at the end of the 18th century, when they were conquered by Parbatiyā armies coming from Gorkha in the west, and incorporated into the new, enlarged and unified Gorkhali kingdom. Nonetheless, their system of structuring society persists up to the present in numerous ceremonies and in the distribution of castes in the Kathmandu Valley.

Newar society and religion make up a highly complex and literate civilisation, derived from the Indian plains, with its own texts, written in what epigraphists today call 'old' or 'classical Newar', and its own forms of art, including sculptures, paintings, and architectural masterpieces, all of which have been assimilated today into the wider Nepali culture. Since at least the early Middle Ages (i.e., the 13th century), this civilisation has spread throughout the Kathmandu Valley and has been restricted mainly to this limited area of 550 square kilometres. It has a long and documented history extending as early as the 5th century CE (i.e., during the Licchavi Period), with local chronicles, stone and copper inscriptions in Sanskrit and Newar as well as various other historical texts. Some periods of its history were particularly glorious, with the building of impressive religious monuments in wood or stone that form the cornerstone of tourist attraction today, and the realisation of extremely refined pieces of religious art (sculpture, wood-carving and painting in particular). The surrounding cultural centres—especially the classical Indian civilisation to the south—have heavily influenced this renowned and distinctive Himalayan society. Newar civilisation possesses intellectuals, priests (Hindu and Buddhist), craftsmen, traders, service castes and, last but not least, farmers. All these castes speak Newar, a highly Indianised Tibeto-Burman language, which began to be written in Indian scripts from the

12th century CE onwards. The members of this group have progressively developed a sense of 'Newar-ness' in the course of a process to which we shall return later (Chapter 12).

Newar civilisation is unequivocally South Asian in character. Its caste system, Hindu and Buddhist Vajrayāna religions, religious texts, architecture, and art, even perhaps its *guthi* religious associations (Chapter 9) are derived from the cultures of the Gangetic plains, with occasional links with South India. Even its language is saturated with borrowings from Indo-European languages, above all Sanskrit. However, some of its elements do not fit in completely with the encompassing Indian social world, whether Hindu or inspired by mediaeval Indian Buddhism. As far as Newar society is concerned, we may mention traces of a bilateral matrimonial system, territorial moieties, an egalitarian spirit within the caste, an unparalleled centrality of territorial bonds, the existence of mono-caste villages or quasi-mono-caste villages functioning according to rules quite independent of the caste system, and so forth. Like other parts of the Central Himalaya, the Kathmandu Valley civilisation is the outcome of a Himalayan interface, with influences not only from the south but also from the north and the east. There is thus reason to believe that the oldest stock of the Newar people is from either the south-eastern Tibetan area or the region of present-day Yunnan (Doherty 1978: 444). These non-Indian elements have definitely been overemphasised by some Newar intellectuals, who have wanted to link Newar identity to indigenous and pre-Hindu tribal ideas, and have consequently adopted a somewhat parochial vision of their society. Newar society has clearly been redesigned and restructured over the years. However, contrary to what has been stated, for instance by my colleague David Gellner in much of his scholarly writings, the presence of these non-Indic components cannot be seriously contested.

To investigate such a complex society, anthropologists must clearly revise the presuppositions they inherit from the 19th century. They must depart from the old-fashioned study of small, enclosed, isolated tribal societies, more or less cut off from the economically and technologically more advanced world, and distinctively acephalous from a political point of view. The societies of the type we are dealing with here are similar in many aspects to those of mediaeval and ancient Europe. They are comparable in all regards with rural and urban French or English pre-industrial societies from, say, the 13th and 14th centuries, with a similar importance of religious ideas and rituals in public life, a pre-modern statecraft loosely

interfering in social activities, a complex division of labour, and a great sophistication of the economy, including in its commercial aspects. Like other societies of a similar type, the Newar cannot be rejected as an otherness supposedly opposed to the Western world. As far as South Asia is concerned, the way was opened both by M.N. Srinivas in his seminal study *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*, and by Louis Dumont's first monograph, *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud*. Relations between the local, often village-based, societies in question and the encompassing urban and textual cultures, Hindu or Buddhist, whose influence had infiltrated everywhere, have to be taken into account. The links between the two are the result of a long history of exchanges that has to be reconstructed. Likewise, the classical and the modern have to be treated as intertwined as far as possible, both historically and methodologically.

My *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal* (1984), as well as Gellner and Quigley's *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal* (1995) clearly adopted a much more diversified type of ethnography and a much broader perspective on the Newar than did G.S. Nepali. It is likely that, even in these two books, the plural outlook has not been employed in an adequate and consistent manner. I am even less convinced today that all groups, Buddhists and Hindus, Śreṣṭha traders and Jyāpu farmers, high pure castes and impure castes, share the same overall view of Newar society. This sort of heterogeneity (or 'heteroglosy') has been stressed by post-modern anthropological studies. It is particularly apparent in matters of rituals. Whatever the case may be, this book conforms to these general methodological trends, with its first cluster of chapters consisting principally in monographic and empirical studies. More wide-ranging and synthetic chapters on territory, the *guthi* association system, gender, and the caste system come later. They provide some theoretical insights on the main features displayed by this society.

City and village

Traditionally, Newar society is based both in cities and villages.[5] In many domains there is an unambiguous opposition between the two. When I shifted from the mono-caste village of Pyangaon to the small, multi-

5 The opposition between cities, *nagara*, and villages, *grāma*, two names derived from Sanskrit words, has been used in ancient documents from the mediaeval period (Vajracharya 1987).

caste city of Panauti, I was confronted by a completely different social universe, composed of different relationships between groups. In Pyangaon, social ties were anchored in the lineage organisation, power was distributed among the elders of the kin groups, and conflict and factions themselves divided the locality between agnatic and uterine lines. Admittedly, the villagers were dependent on the surrounding castes for their economic needs as well as for their ritual ceremonies. But these inter-caste relations were not crucial for the overall functioning of the community. In Panauti, on the other hand, the relations between the castes were of primary importance. In many cases they took precedence over the inner life of the kin groupings within the caste. One reason for this is that many castes were represented locally only by a few families. At the time of communal festivals, a complex system of division of ritual tasks among the various castes enforced the horizontal and internal solidarity of the small city.

This opposition is not at all exceptional. Many rural communities are Jyāpu-dominated villages, with Jyāpus consisting about 80 to 90 per cent of the total population, with some residual families who are members of service castes, such as Nāy butchers or Nau barbers, or other agricultural castes, such as Gathu gardeners and Gwā cow-herders. In these villages, the situation is not radically different from that in Pyangaon. In all cities, on the other hand, the multi-caste distribution of the population is a basic and prerequisite element of society. Social organisation revolves mainly around the royal palace and the temple of the sovereign protective deity, Taleju, which is located at the centre of the locality. Sociologically speaking, a city in the Newar context is defined as much by its multi-caste composition and its trading activities (Toffin 1982*a*: 106–7) as by the size of its population. In the 1970s, the city of Panauti was about the same size in terms of space as a big Jyāpu village such as Theco but much smaller in number of inhabitants than the densely populated locality of Thimi, which was (and still is) predominantly rural.

There is a series of oppositions between cities and villages that, it must be admitted, are not specific to Newar society. For instance, city-dwellers tend to be much more open towards the outside and outsiders themselves, while Jyāpu villagers are notably inward-looking and suspicious of any persons foreign to their community. Likewise, the inhabitants of Newar cities generally despise villagers. They associate them with illiteracy, rude manners and filth and always use derogatory terms to refer to them. These stereotypes even operate within intra-caste boundaries: urban farmers are reluctant to marry their sons and daughters to a

Jyāpu living in the countryside. The same is true of the Śreṣṭha caste: for a man of the city, marriage with a Śreṣṭha woman living in the country is seen as an unsuitable union.

Yet the duality between village and city must not be overstressed. As I have noted already, the housing pattern, the layout and most elements of habitat are shared in common by the two (Toffin 1982*a*). There are no basic differences between the general arrangement of an urban and a village quarter, or ward (Nep. *ṭol*, New. *twāḥ*). The main components, that is, a Gaṇeśa temple, and sometimes also a shrine dedicated to the god of dance and music, exist in both settings. Such components serve to identify and bring together the locality's inhabitants. Especially interesting is the opposition that exists in all Newar settlements, whether urban or rural, between the upper and the lower parts of a locality, corresponding to the upstream and downstream of the nearby river. In nearly all cases, this dichotomy applies only to ritual matters and never to kinship, marriage and kin-groups. This territorial dichotomy is clearly a distinctive feature of Newar civilisation, not derived from India. If any parallel is to be sought, it must be attempted among the Nepali Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnic groups of the hills.

Furthermore, within the group itself, there is no strict opposition between the village and the urban social structure. The rules of kinship, the patrilineal orientation of the society, the lineage structure converging toward its cult of *digudyaḥ* lineage deities, the status of women, the clear-cut division between elders and juniors, and the role of the *guthi* system are nearly the same in both situations. If some specificities do appear here and there, they depend much more on the caste in question than on the type of locality. In other words, in a similar way to what has been reported for India by D.F. Pocock (1960: 81), the anthropology of the Newar cannot be divided into a rural anthropology and an urban anthropology. A fundamental unity of Newar civilisation as a whole is plainly at work in all these matters.

The same fundamental unity also prevails in the religious sphere. Admittedly, there are no ancient Buddhist monasteries in villages,[6] since few Śākyas and Vajrācāryas live in the rural areas, and this is in strong contrast with the situation in the cities. Likewise, the pantheon of divinities revered in urban centres is more complete, and sometimes more sophisticated than in the villages. The cities are surrounded by sets of the

6 Rare exceptions are mentioned by Locke 1985, p. 457 (Thimi), 241 (Baregaon), 235-36 (Bungamati).

eight forms of gods and goddesses—Bhairava and Mātṛkā for the most part—which confer a cosmological dimension to the religious image of the city. This symbolic dimension is absent from villages. Rural localities are usually symbolically ruled by only one or two main deities, male or female. But in all other domains, similarities prevail. The rites performed in the domestic and the public spheres, the deities worshipped and the festivals observed are almost identical in both cases. Even Tantric practices are widespread in the Newar countryside. Hindu Jyāpu villages generally have their own Tantric priests who receive their Tantric initiation from Karmācārya specialists living in urban centres. In Buddhist Jyāpu villages, the farmers learn Tantrism mainly from Vajrācārya Buddhist priests. At times, in the country as in the town, rituals mark out a locality as a separate unit and reiterate its existence as a cohesive entity. Similarly, the local categories of 'outside' *(pine)* and 'inside' *(dune)* as well as those of what is allowed *(jyū)* and what is not *(majyū)* are emphatically used in the social and religious contexts of both kinds of settlement.

One reason for this similarity between town and village is the similar distribution of castes within them. Jyāpus, for instance, live in cities as well as in villages. As will be explained in Chapter 3, they made up the majority of the population of the two cities of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur even until just a few decades ago. Traditionally, they used to cultivate the surrounding rice fields in the daytime and return to their city houses in the evening. Śreṣṭha, the second largest Newar caste, and probably the most heterogeneous one, are more concentrated in cities and small trading centres, but are sometimes also established in rural areas; in this respect the case of Satungal or Bulu may be referred to. The remaining castes live in both cities and villages, with the exception of Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs, Karmācārya priests and some Chatharīya patrician families (the upper strata of the Śreṣṭhas), who were mostly associated with state temples and kingship and are concentrated in urban centres.

In addition, there are reasons to believe that the three royal cities of the classical (i.e., Malla) period of the Kathmandu Valley—Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur—grew out of the aggregation of previously extant villages or smaller settlements. Clear traces of such processes have been found for the cities of Bhaktapur and Kathmandu (Toffin 1993: 118-21). On the other hand, some villages were created by certain kings often around an established temple dedicated to a Śaivite deity, and populated first by city-dwellers. According to local chronicles, this has long

been a recognised way of founding a settlement. Villages and cities are emphatically called *dey* in Newar (from Sanskrit *desa)*, a term that refers not only to one's country, but also to each settlement, whether urban or rural.

Furthermore, rural areas have been in close contact with cities for a long time. They have never remained isolated from their surroundings but have instead been related to urban centres in a number of ways, both economically and religiously. To limit ourselves to just one example: villagers used to pay homage at fixed times to the main deity, either male or female, revered at a district or a more confined administrative level. This deity, associated with the nearby main urban trading centre, rules over a *kṣetra*, or territory, made up of the city and several villages.[7] Likewise, the religious ideas dominant in the cities, especially in royal palaces *(lāykū*, from Skt. *rāja-kula)*[8] and Buddhist monasteries *(bāhāḥ*, from Skt. *vihāra)*, have spread to rural areas in several ways, in particular through the agency of religious specialists summoned on ritual occasions.

Admittedly, the Jyāpu peasants are Indianised in a less profound manner than the Śreṣṭhas and other high Hindu castes living in the cities. The researcher living in a Jyāpu environment quickly comes to realise the presence of Indic civilisation, particularly in the religious sphere, albeit in a somewhat superficial manner. It does not involve the basic principles of social organisation. One can also assert that elements from classical India have mixed with indigenous cultural features and been reshaped along different lines. Yet Jyāpus also live in cities, and their social organisation there does not differ in any fundamental way from that in the villages. Similarly, even some Śreṣṭhas make their living from agriculture, and sometimes live in villages. It is thus impossible to correlate the degree of Indianisation with the division between city and village. The opposition between Śreṣṭhas traders and Jyāpu farmers or high castes and untouchables seems to be more relevant than the village-city dichotomy.

Opposition between core and periphery

The groups living on the edges of the Kathmandu Valley and beyond in a somewhat mountainous environment also have to be taken into consideration for a more complete understanding of Newar society and culture. Among these groups, one may mention the Balāmi wood-cutters

7 On the concept of ruling deities in the Newar context, see Toffin 1993.

8 According to T. Manandhar (1986: 227).

and -sellers; the Pahari basket-makers; the Putuwār, who are palanquin-carriers and makers of flattened rice as well as extractors and sellers of red clay; the Desar farmers; and perhaps also the Swãgumi bamboo-box makers and farmers of Pyangaon. They all speak mutually unintelligible Newar dialects; the Pahari language being the one that differs most from the colloquial Newar of Kathmandu and Lalitpur. These marginal groups live close to forested areas, between the flat Kathmandu Valley plateau and the surrounding hills inhabited by populations different from the Newar (Tamang, Parbatiyā Hindu castes, Danuwar). Hierarchically, they are ranked just below the Jyāpu Newar farmer caste, i.e., somewhere in the middle, between the Brāhmaṇs at the top and the impure castes at the bottom. These social groups have so far received little attention. I was actually the first anthropologist to take an interest in them and undertake fieldwork in their outlying villages. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, these small populations, each consisting of some thousands of members only, sometimes even less, are closely interconnected in many respects.

What is more, these peripheral groups share some significant cultural traits. Besides agriculture and animal husbandry, they are traditionally oriented towards the forest or forest-related activities: they were hunters, bird-catchers, fishermen and loggers, and they dealt in wild plants and a kind of red clay, called *rāto māṭo* in Nepali, which they sold. From the point of view of kinship, traces of cross-cousin marriage and the division of the society into moieties—namely, duck-killers and chicken-killers—are features found among them, undoubtedly in a more salient manner than among Newar Jyāpu peasants. In addition, child-marriage was broadly practised until very recent times. Matrimonial unions between close relatives, not only on the maternal side as far as men are concerned, but also with agnates, occur repeatedly. Religiously speaking, these groups worship forest deities *(sikāri deutā)*, perform god-dances to a large extent, revere Bhimsen in relation to the forest, and also revere a deity called Cundyaḥ. Some of them (Balāmi and Pahari) have shamanic-like cults. Even physically, these groups present some similarities that will be interesting to document.

The lifestyle of these groups also differs from that of the Newar in many ways, with the exception of the inhabitants of Pyangaon, who are distinctively Newar. Balāmis, Paharis, and Putuwārs dress differently—especially the women—with clothes and jewellery more typical of hill cultures than that of the indigenous Newar of the Kathmandu Valley.

Their diet consists of much more maize or millet porridge than of the Newar's staple of rice. Traditionally, they have houses roofed with thatch and live in loosely knit villages, similar to the habitats of the Tamang and Parbatiyā living in neighbouring areas. Despite these material cultural elements borrowed from outside the pale of Newar civilisation, the social organisation and the religion of Putuwārs, Balāmis and Paharis are markedly Newar in orientation and character. All these groups for instance have a *guthi* association, a feature characteristic of the Newar. Their life-cycle rituals are similar to those of the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley, even if *ihi* (mock-marriage for girls) and *burā jākwa* (old-age consecration ceremonies) are not performed. Their pantheon includes some deities worshipped in the hills; but the majority of their gods and goddesses are typically Newar.

The puzzling hybrid culture of these peripheral groups raises interesting issues with regard to the evolution of the Newar population and civilisation through the course of history. In particular, it poses the question of a possible substratum on which Newar civilisation could have been built. It is in fact likely that Paharis, Swāgumis, Balāmis and others were closely interconnected at some point in the past. But in what manner? Were the original settlements of these small groups located somewhere in the adjoining hills or in areas further away? Or, were they expelled from the centre of the Kathmandu Valley by invaders in ancient times? As is known, invasions from outside the Valley were frequent in earlier centuries. If the second hypothesis is one day fully proved, it could be argued that these marginalised communities have preserved old elements of Newar or proto-Newar civilisation, pertaining hypothetically to the Kirāṭa Period. Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer these questions in the present state of research. Physical anthropology and linguistics may be of some help in resolving these matters in the future.

It is relevant to stress that the notion of periphery is taken here in a sense more ethnic or cultural than geographic. For instance, the small trading town of Panauti, which lies beyond the rim of the Valley, does not belong to any peripheral ensembles. The multi-caste population of this predominantly Newar locality reproduces, in a location some distance from Kathmandu, a distinctive kingly and pure Hindu model copied from the former Malla capitals, especially from Bhaktapur, which is geographically the closest of the three. As a matter of fact, this outlying urban centre, situated in a plains environment amidst rich rice fields, was an established Hindu centre for the surrounding region. There is even

some reason to believe that it was once a secondary residence for the Malla kings of Bhaktapur (Toffin 1984: 239). Panauti's case recalls the galactic model elaborated by Stanley J. Tambiah in his book on the interaction between the centre and the periphery in the Buddhist kingdom of Thailand (1976). With its small sanctuary of Taleju goddess and its wide courtyard called *lāykū* ('palace') in the centre of town, Panauti is clearly a reproduction and imitation of a larger political unit in which it was included.

Paul Mus (1902-1969), a former professor of Asian studies at the Collège de France, Paris, imagined in 1935 a spatial model to analyse the process of Indianisation in most parts of Asia (1977: 118). The centres of both Hindu and Buddhist Indian civilisation—ordered through kingship, and with Brāhmaṇ priests and patrician high-caste aristocratic families attached to the royal palace—were set apart from far-off zones, where the classical and literate culture had not exerted its influence in such a profound manner. Among the latter, rural areas, he further differentiated between what he called *alvéoles* ('alveolus') and *aréoles* ('areola'). The former represents intermediate zones where Indic ideas have penetrated in a rather incomplete manner, while the latter corresponds to the frontier regions of the kingdom, the borderlands on the outskirts of the forest, where indigenous cults and traditions are still very much alive.

As was emphasised above, this pattern cannot be accepted without reservation in the case of the Kathmandu Valley. The rural areas of the Valley have been heavily influenced by Indic ideas for many centuries, and the former royal cities have for a long time included rural wards inhabited by Jyāpu farmers. The social organisation and religion of these urban agriculturalists are quite similar to that of the rural areas. However, by and large, and to the best of my knowledge, the ideal-type model suggested by Paul Mus retains some truth and does correspond to empirical data at least schematically. It helps by providing an adequate perspective on the periphery in relation to the centre of Newar civilisation.

Furthermore, this ring of populations living on the rural edges of the Valley, somewhat hybrid in culture but distinctly Newar in their social organisation, raises questions about caste—or ethnic—identity. As was stressed by Fredrik Barth (1969), people living within certain boundaries choose a few cultural attributes—dress, language, aspects of lifestyle—as overt signs of their distinctiveness. Signs such as jewellery, costumes, lifestyle, shapes of houses, and the like clearly serve as identity markers. They are culture-carrying links that help identify those who

belong to particular groups. Balāmis and Paharis, the two groups focused on in this volume, hesitate between a sense of belonging to the encompassing Newar ensemble and a separate identity. In many ways, thus, these marginal groups are relatively poorly assimilated with the Newar.

We have obviously reached a zone here where the integrative forces of the old Malla city-kingdom capitals turn out to be much weaker than they are in the centre. Some deities from these peripheral areas were and still are symbolically important for the centre of the Kathmandu Valley. The Bhairava of the village of Halchok, a Putuwār locality, may be mentioned in this connection. This deity plays a crucial role in the main annual festival of the city of Kathmandu, Indra Jātrā (Toffin 2006), which occurs during the monsoon. Yet in all probability these outlying areas formerly lay outside the boundaries of state control, or, to put it in a less categorical manner, were administered in a manner much less centralised than were the rural areas well within the Valley. Newar identity in itself lacks sharp boundaries in these border zones; it is challenged by new feelings of separate identity. For instance, Balāmis and Putuwārs are still related to the overall Newar caste system, but this connection is particularly weak and one-sided. With regards to religious matters, their members have very few obligations towards Newar society, if indeed any at all, as will be discussed later. In addition, Paharis and Balāmis do not only call upon Newar service castes for their rituals; they also summon specialists, whether priestly or artisanal, belonging to Parbatiyā castes and other hill ethnic groups. These are, to a great extent, the reasons why these two groups have developed an awareness of their separate identities, and why they function in many ways as quasi-ethnic communities.

Social change

Social change within the Kathmandu Valley has been a constant fact over the last two centuries. It would be a gross error to consider Newar society of the 1970s a direct legacy of the mediaeval Malla Period. Society did not remain unchanged over the years, in a frozen state, cut off from all external events. The conquest of the Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1768-69 and the substitution of the Malla royal families by the Shahs as the ruling dynasty obviously came as a great shock to the Newar. Not only were they suddenly overcome by a population they considered 'uncivilised', they were also dispossessed of their economic, intellectual and political power. The trauma provoked by this event is still intense among the Newar, and has induced feelings of resentment. The subse-

quent systematic policy of confiscation of land, the restriction on the use of Newar as a literary language, and the eviction of Newars from high positions in government had evident implications throughout the 19th century. These consequences have not been very well documented thus far, but we can presume that the introversion typical of present-day Newar communities has something to do with this brutal takeover and, consequently, their subservient rank within Nepali society as a whole.

Nonetheless, the dramatic transformations that have occurred in the Kathmandu Valley over the last four decades—since 1970—have deeply affected Newar society and culture and produced unparalleled social changes. The opening up of the country to new ideas and goods, the advent of economic possibilities, a modern education that has practically wiped out illiteracy among most castes, and the population explosion due in large part to the introduction of western medicine, are some of the decisive factors that have contributed to all-embracing and ongoing processes of transformation. Between 1952 and 2001, the Valley population increased from 410,000 to more than 1.5 million. The population of the city of Kathmandu itself, which was 150,000 in 1971 is now over one million (1,100,000 in 2001), including those living in the suburbs, and is growing at an annual rate of six per cent, nearly three times the rate of increase for the country as a whole (2.38 per cent).

The frenzied building of houses has reached unbelievable proportions in more recent years, largely because of the arrival of those displaced from Maoist-controlled zones and districts from 1996 onwards. It is estimated that 10,000 houses are being built every year in the Valley (*The Kathmandu Post*, 15 February, 2005). Consequently, the price of land has spiralled exponentially, especially within or near the Kathmandu-Lalitpur conurbation. Parcels of land suitable for construction within the immediate suburbs of Kathmandu city, near the Ring Road, are now being sold for more than 700,000 Euros per hectare (150,000 to 200,000 Nepali rupees per *ānā*).[9] Despite these exorbitant prices, rice fields are gradually being turned into bungalows and ornamental gardens. Today, Jyāpu peasants practise agriculture even less.

It is also important to consider the political changes. The Shah monarchy, which became powerful again after the fall of the long, despotic Rana regime (1846-1951), was encouraged by the Indian government and the internal anti-Rana forces to establish a democratic system mostly

9 One *ānā* = 342 square feet = 1/16 *ropani*. A *ropani* covers approximately 5,470 square feet, or 508 square metres.

modelled on India. After a lengthy thirty-year parenthesis of royal autocratic rule during the so-called Panchayat Period (1960-90), and a retrograde episode marked by direct rule by the king (2003-06), a democratic and secular political system is gradually being established. The monarchy has become merely ceremonial after the mass demonstrations of April 2006, and the king is no longer the head of the Royal Nepal Army, which has been renamed the 'Nepal Army'. The country might even come out of the current transition *without* a kingship. Likewise, since 1960, legal reference is no longer made to the caste system in the civil code, and caste-based discrimination has become illegal. Newars now live in an increasingly egalitarian and secularising world. They are progressively subjected more and more to new, modern ideas. Śreṣṭhas, the dominant high-caste group, for instance, now look more frequently to western models to conform to and increasingly speak Nepali and English instead of Newar, even within the home. These trends have also affected religion, with the rise of new, egalitarian ideas such as those advocated by Theravāda Buddhism.

These changes have been considerably greater in magnitude and scope than those that took place in western countries during the same period. They are transforming Newar society radically. For instance, the old Newar social order centred on the former (i.e., Malla) royal palace is becoming obsolete. Collective festivals are still celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour by villagers and city-dwellers alike, but the rituals involved are becoming increasingly disconnected from social life. Religion has not yet become an entirely private affair, but it legitimates less and less the prevailing hierarchies. Moreover, the inter-caste cooperation and interdependence described in Chapters 10 and 11 in relation to domestic and collective ceremonies are in the process of collapse. The lower castes are no longer willing to fulfil their old religious obligations towards high castes, embodied by landowners and powerful groups. The ancient, hierarchical patrimonial and religious order does not fit well with the egalitarian spirit now triumphant in the public sphere. Many traditional values, too, are losing out. This is especially true of the younger generations. Young men (but also, gradually, women) are rejecting customary lineage hierarchies. They have begun creating their own organisations, based on initiative and reform, and these exist in parallel to the old, religiously-oriented and somewhat routinised *guthi* system.

Most of the monographic chapters in this volume deal in some way with social change and provide data on these issues. But the last two

chapters focus specifically on these transformations. Chapter 12 analyses the construction of a new identity among Newar Jyāpu farmers through the study of two recently established caste organisations. This is a clear example of the process of the 'substantialisation' of caste to which Louis Dumont drew attention in his book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980*a*). Chapter 13 appraises the impact of social and religious changes on the status of women, traditionally relegated to a subservient position. Changes that would have been thought of as impossible 30 years ago have nevertheless taken place in recent years. This is particularly true of the division of labour within and outside the family. The old forms of specialisation are gradually fading away. Women now have access to a large spectrum of jobs and activities from which they were earlier barred.

Yet frequent trips back to the sites where I did my fieldwork over the last 30 years lead me to believe that these social transformations are not as profound or rapid as I had initially thought them to be. Traditional social structures do not disappear as quickly as might be imagined. In all areas of the currently overpopulated Kathmandu Valley, pre-industrial structural arrangements have persisted to the present time, even in the old city of Kathmandu. Caste distinctions have been weakened but are still present in many ways. They remain socially and ritually relevant, especially in small towns and villages. Even today the hierarchical and complementary relationships between castes are repeatedly being constructed during ceremonies. The cultural and spatial symbols through which the old model of society is manifested are still operative in the Valley, especially during festivals. To sum up, the reach of social transformations should not be overestimated. During my last visits to Pyangaon (2004-5), I was particularly struck by the maintenance of the traditional social pattern and the persisting isolation of the locality. Obviously, the internal lineage structure here possesses remarkable capacities for stemming the tide of change. To the eyes of the modern city-dweller, Pyangaon may appear in many respects as a backward village caught up in a process of belated transformation. Surprisingly, its inhabitants remain relatively sheltered from the deluge of social and economic change that is befalling the whole of the Kathmandu Valley with increasing force.

Paris-Nargis
July 2006

1

The Citrakār

Caste of painters and mask-makers

The Citrakār are a group of about 1,200 people (in 1974), i.e., 0.3 per cent of the Newar population, and are clustered in the urban centres of the Valley.[1] Nearly 80 per cent of them live in Kathmandu (about 100 households) and Lalitpur (80 households). Traditionally, they are painters and the name of the caste comes from the Sanskrit word *citra* which means 'image, painting'.[2] In Newar they are referred to as Pūṃ, a word whose etymology is not known.[3] Although the question is controversial

First published in *Contested Hierarchies*: *A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by David Gellner and Declan Quigley, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 240-63. An earlier version of this paper was published in French (Toffin 1975*b*). I would like to thank Krishna Prasad Rimal and Sushila Manandhar for their help in collecting data in the field. Since the 1975 article first appeared, Niels Gutschow has published a short paper on the Citrakār (1979). See also A.W. Macdonald and A. Vergati Stahl (1979).

1 The figure is from my own census carried out in 1974. C. Rosser (1966: 86) gave a figure of 170 households based on his fieldwork carried out in the mid-1950s.

2 There are also painter castes called Citrakār in India. See, for example, R.V. Russell (1916: ii. 432-40).

3 Some Citrakār informants suggested to me that Pūṃ comes from the Sanskrit *nipuṇa*: 'adroit, skilled' or *puṇya*: 'merit, reward'. These etymologies are doubtful. One Citrakār of Kathmandu also suggests a possible derivation from a Tibetan word *pū* which, according to him, means a 'good worker'. In a personal letter (25 November, 1993), A.W. Macdonald has written that 'this etymology is doubtful though one of the meanings of *dpon-po* in colloquial Tibetan is "expert; master"'.

among them, the position of the Citrakār in the caste hierarchy is quite low, considerably lower, for example, than the Maharjan (Jyāpu) farmer caste. Broadly speaking, they have the same status as the Mālākar (Gathu, traditionally gardeners), the Mānandhar (Sāymi, oil-pressers), and the Rañjitkār (Chipā, printers and dyers).

The Citrakār consider themselves Buddhists *(buddhāmargī)*. They worship both Buddhist and Hindu deities and use Vajrācārya priests for their religious ceremonies. These priests are paid both in money *(dakṣiṇā)*

Table 1. **Some paintings done by the Citrakār during festivals and other religious ceremonies at fixed points in the calendar**

Baiśākh (April-May)	1. Painting of the face of Bhairava on a bamboo mat hung on the façade of the Bhairava temple in Taumādhī ṭol, Bhaktapur, during Bisket Jātrā. 2. Painting of the eyes of Bhairava on the wheels of the Rāto Matsyendranāth cart in Pulcok, Lalitpur, before the *rath jātrā*. The painting of the statue of Rāto Matsyendranāth is undertaken by a special Śreṣṭha sub-group, the Nyekhu.
Śravāṇ (July-August)	1. Painting of the face of Ghaṇṭakarṇa *daitya* (demon on baskets during Gathāmugaḥ festival, *kṛṣṇa* 14). 2. Various *aṣṭamātṛkā pūjā* are made during Gathāmugaḥ festival, *kṛṣṇa* 14, especially in connection with the purification of the house *(chẽ bau biyegu)*. On these occasions, Citrakār paint small images of the eight Mātṛkā goddesses. 3. Various paintings on paper of *nāgas* (serpents) during Nāg Pañcamī, *śukla* 5 (to be fixed above the main door-frame and inside the house). 4. (Occasional) repainting of Dīpaṅkara masks for Pañcadān in Lalitpur, *śukla* 8. (In Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Panauti, this festival occurs during Bhādra, *kṛṣṇa* 13.)
Bhādra (August-September)	1. Painting of cow faces *(sā khwāḥ)* and Gaṇeśa figures during Sā Pāru (Gāi Jātrā), *kṛṣṇa* 1 (these images are worn only by males, and that, too, generally young boys). 2. Painting of Gaṇeśa figures for Cathāḥ (Gaṇeśa festival), *śukla* 4. 3. Painting of the eyes and face of Bhairava on the wheels and pole of the cart of Kumārī, Gaṇeśa, and Bhairava during Indra Jātrā in Kathmandu.

Āśvin (September-October)	1. Painting of Vasundharā images, the Buddhist goddess of wealth, in Basandol, *kṛṣṇa* 3. 2. During Dasaī (Mwaḥni), painting of holy images of Durgā, Bhagvatī, Bhairava, Gaṇeśa (to be fixed inside the *naḥlā swanegu thāy).* 3. Painting the face of a demon, Mahiṣāsur, on a kind of pumpkin *(bhuyuphasi)*, to be cut into two pieces by the householder or the head of the *pāyāḥ guthi*, śukla 10. 4. (Occasional) painting of god masks for Navadurgā, Aṣṭamātṛkā, various Devī dances all around the Kathmandu Valley.
Kārtik (October-November)	1. Printing and painting of images of Lakṣmī during Tihār (New. Swanti). 2. Painting of Bhimsen (Bhindyaḥ) images, to be fixed in shops and workshops, also during Tihār.
Mārga (November-December)	1. Painting of 64 *kalaś* in Cāngu Nārāyaṇ temple (Thīlā Punhī).
Pauṣ (December-January)	1. Repainting the Seto Matsyendranāth image in Kathmandu before the 'great bath' *(mahāsnāna)* of the god, *śukla* 8.
Māgh (January-February)	1. Painting of Sarasvatī images for Śrī Pañcamī, *śukla* 5, to be put up in the house.
Caitra (March-April)	1. Painting of the eyes of Bhairava on the wheels of Seto Matsyendranāth cart before Janabāhādyaḥ jātrā, *śukla pakṣa.*

Note: Citrakār also paint holy images for life-cycle rituals and exorcisms.

and food. It is considered particularly meritorious for a wealthy member of the caste to erect a *caitya (cibhāḥ,* small *stūpa)* in his ward and dedicate land to provide it with regular offerings.

The role of painters and paintings in Newar society

The traditional work of the Citrakār covers many different activities. They print as well as paint holy images for certain festivals and domestic rituals (on paper, clay pots, bamboo trays, wooden structures, and cloth);

they construct and paint masks worn during sacred dances; they draw and paint pictures of divinities around door-frames when marriages and old-age ceremonies *(burā jākwa)* are celebrated; they also gild statues with gold powder. The Citrakār have thus played an important role in the development of Newar art.

Their paintings on scrolls (New. *paubāhāḥ*, Skt. *paṭa)*, which date from the 16th or 17th centuries, attain a level of artistic excellence that equals, and even surpasses, that of the Tibetan *thang-kas*. They are also responsible for most of the frescoes in the principal temples dedicated to the goddesses of the Kathmandu Valley, particularly Taleju, the tutelary deity of the Malla kings.[4]

This art is quintessentially religious. Take the masks for example: they represent the entire spectrum of divinities, whether Hindu (Bhairava, Gaṇeśa, Mātṛkā, etc), Buddhist (Tārā, Hevajra, Mañjuśrī, various *bodhisattvas*, etc), or belonging to both at the same time (Yoginī, Lokapalā, Vetāla, etc). On painted scrolls, the motifs that figure most frequently are the magical diagrams known as *maṇḍalas*, and gods in their fierce and dancing forms. Used as aids to religious meditation, the *paubāhāḥs* are publicly displayed on certain dates during the festival calendar, especially during the Newar month of Gūṃlā (August). As for the frescoes, the best known depict the struggles of the gods against the demons.

These figures conform to the prescriptions laid down in local model books. Most Citrakār have their own copies of these sketch guides at home and follow the directions given to the letter. All of the details are fixed: the dimensions, the colours, the gestures, and the attributes. Breaking the traditional iconographic rules can turn a deity from a beneficent force into a malevolent one. In passing, it should be mentioned that on all these holy paintings, the Citrakār have to 'open the eyes' *(dṛṣṭi kankegu)* of the deities, a religious act regarded as indispensable.

Because they are in regular contact with statues and images of important Tantric deities that are kept hidden in private shrines, the Citrakār receive a traditional 'initiation', composed of a number of mantras, from their Vajrācārya priests. Citrakār women can also receive this special 'initiation'. The ceremony, which is usually collective, is not called *dekhā (dīkṣā)* like that of the high Newar castes, both Buddhist and Hindu, but

4 For information on these frescoes, the oldest of which go back to the end of the 14th century (in the Taleju temple in Bhaktapur), see Singh (1971: 195ff).

nhikã, a term which also (and more appropriately) designates the rites which the 'initiate' must perform every morning in honour of his *āgādyaḥ*. This divinity, which is kept behind curtains in an isolated room in the house, must not be seen by a 'non-initiate' nor by any outsider (even a Vajrācārya, the Citrakār emphasise). The Citrakār who performs a daily *nhikã* rite must abstain from eating chicken and avoid restaurants where there is a risk of being served food which has been polluted or prepared by someone of a lower caste.

One can see, then, that the Citrakār play an important role in both the public and private religious life of the Kathmandu Valley. They also participate actively in certain festival rituals. For example, a Citrakār (from Haugaḥ) represents the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu during the *kārtik pyākhã* dance which takes place every autumn in front of the old royal palace in Lalitpur. In the course of this dance, Hiraṇyakaśipu is killed by Narasīṃha,[5] an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and resuscitated a few moments later by a Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ with the help of mantras and pure water drawn from Māgaḥ Hiti on the north side of the palace.[6] Another function of the Citrakār derives from indigenous ideas about medicine. Should large boils erupt on someone's back or belly, a Citrakār is called in to paint two lions on either side of the navel of the afflicted person. This type of ailment, called *jwanā kai*, is reputed to be caused by a *nāga* (serpent) from Itum Bāhāḥ in Kathmandu, and it is said that only lions drawn by a Citrakār will save the patient.

In the past, Newar painters used vegetable and mineral colours. Certain vegetable products (beans) and a great number of different soils came from the Valley itself. Indigo and carmine were imported from India, lapis lazuli from Tibet. As an agglutinative, they used Indian gum or the white of an egg. Today, natural pigments have been abandoned and replaced by chemical products, manufactured in India and sold in the bazaar in powder sachets. As an adhesive, paste made from buffalo skin has replaced egg-white and gum. The brushes, previously made from the hair of goats or female buffaloes, are now, like the colours, purchased in the market. In general, today's techniques are less subtle than those of the past and one no longer finds, in present-day scroll paintings, the particular brilliance that the natural colours lent to earlier works.

5 Interestingly enough, the god Narasiṃha is himself incarnated by a Rājopādhāya dancer (cf. Chapter 2).

6 *Hiti* (New. 'well').

Unlike the Tibetans, the Citrakār did not have recourse to printing plates or pumice to prepare their canvases. Instead, for a long time, they have used blocks to print their holy images. The plates, called *thāsā* or *palā*, are made of wood *(Magnolia* or *Boehmeria rugulosa)* and are made by engravers who are Tulādhar et al (Urāy) or Śākya by caste. The ink, which is made of soot or bought directly in the market, is mixed with glue. The paper comes from Kathmandu and is sold in reams of a hundred sheets (47x70 cm). Squatting on the floor, the painter prints horizontally on a wooden support.

In the old days, the printer worked alone or with the help of one of his children on the second floor of the house. The images were sometimes sold individually, sometimes exchanged for grain. However, while most service castes have hereditary relations with their patrons, this was never the case between painter and client; the customer could change his supplier as it suited him. The more important works—masks, frescoes, scroll paintings—were generally commissioned by religious associations and paid for in kind (grain, sugar, clarified butter, salt, etc). Some Citrakār, as will be seen later, still continue to have contracts with *guthi* associations for the upkeep of frescoes and the manufacture of masks.

It is difficult to know exactly how members of this caste lived in the beginning of the 20th century. One can, however, say that the sale of religious paintings did not constitute their sole source of income. In addition to the produce of *guthi* lands, to which they were entitled in exchange for decorative work in temples, some Citrakār also owned fields cultivated by tenants, mostly Maharjans (Jyāpu). The Citrakār of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur also have a long tradition of distilling and selling alcohol, a tradition they maintain up to the present day.

For the last fifteen years or so, the development of tourism has led some Citrakār to place their workshops on the ground floor of the house and to specialise in the manufacture of souvenirs: masks, ashtrays, decorative mirrors, paintings and so on. This work tends to be mass produced, with the entire family working together, with the result that the quality of the paintings has rapidly become more and more crude.

Nevertheless, such curio shops have been set up by only a small minority. In spite of the soaring growth of tourism, the craftsmanship of the Citrakār has been in severe jeopardy since the beginning of the 20th century. In 1974, only 20 per cent of the Citrakār still devoted themselves to their traditional profession, either as a principal or secondary occupation. Among these, some have reorientated their artistic skills by

turning to more commercial ventures (posters, signboards for businesses, advertising hoardings). Others have turned to painting buildings and have specialised in whitewashing houses. Yet others produce figurative paintings, inspired by folklore, for the rooms of the Valley's big hotels. Finally, some Citrakār have become photographers and put their traditional knowledge to good use by retouching photographs. As for the 80 per cent of Citrakār who had completely abandoned painting, among their number were many civil servants, merchants, and drivers of taxis and heavy goods vehicles.

Kinship and marriage

The Citrakār are divided into small patrilineal groups four to six generations deep called *kawaḥ*. These lineages, which are not named, are rather weakly structured. They fall apart as soon as the memory of a common agnatic ancestor has faded, usually after five generations or so. The *kawaḥ* rarely own material goods in common and they have little influence in the collective life of the community.[7] These patrilineal groups are preeminently defined in religious terms and are manifested most clearly at the time of funerals. On the demise of close agnates *(phuki)*, who are, in principle, members of the same lineage, a mourning period of thirteen days is observed. During this time, *phuki* are held to be in a state of pollution. In contrast, the mourning period for more distant agnates *(tāpā phuki)* or married daughters *(mhyāy macā)* is only four days. Among the Citrakār, these two latter categories of kin purify themselves at the end of the mourning period by simply rubbing the face with mustard cake *(khaunā silegu)*. For close kin, purification rituals are much more complex.

One of the defining attributes of the Newar lineage system, and Citrakār lineages are no exception, is the cult of *digudyaḥ*. Each *kawaḥ* collectively worships this divinity once a year, in the month of Baiśākh (April-May), on open sites located at the edge of their towns of residence. In certain families the birthdays of the oldest members *(thakāli)* are also marked by offerings to this deity. However, the cult of *digudyaḥ* has declined considerably because of recent economic and social changes. Today, normally only a small group of people turn up to make the offerings (which are usually vegetarian). I even know of Citrakār families

7 The word *kawaḥ* is a fairly vague term which can be used to designate other social groups not all of which are based on kinship.

who have given up going to their traditional shrine and who, when the appointed day comes, worship their *digudyaḥ* on the terrace of their house while facing the site they used to frequent.

In Lalitpur, lineages are known by the names of the different quarters *(twāḥ)* where the Citrakār live. In the past there seemed to have been a correspondence between kinship groups and residential areas. That is what elderly informants indicated when naming six *kawaḥ* for the whole town: 1. Nugaḥ, 2. Haugaḥ, 3. Saugaḥ, 4. Phõtakā, 5. Tsucikā, and 6. Cārku (or Cālakhu). However, as in Kathmandu, migration from one town to another has considerably weakened the territorial base of kinship groups. Some lineages have become extinct; others have split up into several branches. Today, no one has a clear idea of the current Citrakār kinship groups in Lalitpur or of the areas of the town they correspond to.

As with all Newars, affinal relations play an important role for the Citrakār. In particular, the mother's brother *(pāju)* keeps a watchful eye on the education of his sister's son and makes gifts of clothes to him on the occasion of his initiation ritual *(kaytā pūjā)*. It should be noted that the term *pāju* is used in an extended classificatory sense: every male belonging to the mother's lineage, even a child, can fill this role. In certain cases, two or three 'maternal uncles' take part in the *kaytā pūjā* of their nephew and play an active ritual role. In general, a child enjoys freer relations with his maternal uncle than with his father.

Another important relationship established by marriage is with the husbands of sisters and daughters *(jilājā* or *jicā bhāju)*. These relatives are invited to all domestic and calendrical feasts *(nakhatyā)*. Sons-in-law must show respect, and a certain reserve, towards their parents-in-law. They should never go to the house of their wife's parents without a formal invitation (traditionally delivered by a Maharjan messenger). Unlike the Swãgumi of Pyangaon (Toffin 1984: 165), the Citrakār *jilājā* does not have any special function during funerals. In the kinship terminology (in Kathmandu and Lalitpur), one might note the terms *maleju* to designate the wife of the maternal uncle and *jicā pāju* (or *pāju)* to designate the husband of the paternal aunt.

Depending on the informant, marriage restrictions apply to between five and seven generations on both the father's and mother's side. This means that no marriage may take place either within the range of agnatic relatives known as *phuki* or inside the lineage *(kawaḥ)*. Traditionally, marriages were arranged by parents. A father who wanted to arrange a

marriage for his son employed an intermediary *(lami)* to sound out possible partners and make the initial approaches. With very few exceptions, marriages took place only with other Citrakār. However, unions often took place between Citrakār from different towns, particularly between Lalitpur and Kathmandu. The age at marriage was generally very low because, like the Maharjan and the Mānandhar, the Citrakār used to practise child marriage. I have come across several cases of marital unions between children aged less than ten. In such cases, the young bride would only come to her husband's house for festivals; she would not actually go to live with him until she was 16 or 17 years old, and sometimes not even until after the birth of her first child. It is also worth pointing out that parents frequently organised several marriages at the same time in order to economise on the cost of marriage ceremonies. This practice was common among many low-status Newar castes.

Inter-caste marriages have become considerably more common since the decade of the 1960s, particularly in Kathmandu, where roughly half the Citrakār weddings involve a spouse of another caste. These alliances are considered 'love marriages' and do not involve elaborate ceremonies. Nevertheless, the central act of the traditional Newar marriage, known as *hwākegu*, during which the spouses-to-be exchange a number of small gifts, is celebrated in the bridegroom's house. Most mixed marriages take place with other Newar castes (Rañjitkār, Mānandhar, Pradhān, Tulādhar et al [Urāy], Śākya, etc) but there are also some with Parbatiyā castes (Bāhun, Chetrī). Such unions do not give rise to expulsion from the caste, except in the case of a marriage with someone belonging to an impure caste. However, the caste status of children of mixed marriages is rather confused. On the advice of his father, one of my Kathmandu informants, who was born of a mixed Citrakār-Tulādhar marriage, changed his name to Citradhar, splicing the names of both parents!

Divorce *(pārpācuke)* seems always to have been frequent. Those who were married as children were particularly prone to separation in adulthood. Remarriage of widows is not encouraged, but nor is it strictly forbidden. Should a 'husband' die prematurely while still a child, his young spouse could reclaim her freedom by sending a small sack of betel nuts *(gwe lita chwayegu)* to her parents-in-law. When a woman died, it was possible, but not obligatory, for the husband to marry her younger sister. It was, however, forbidden to marry the deceased's elder sister *(sasaḥ tatā)*. The custom of levirate is forbidden among Newars, who consider it to be a form of incest.

Cases of matrilocal residence are very rare. The son-in-law who lives with his wife's parents is known by the Nepali term *ghar juwaī* by the Citrakār. When a son-in-law continues to live at his wife's house after the death of her parents, he is called *dwalāji*, a very pejorative term among all Newars.

The *sī guthi* or the *guthi* of the dead

The role of the *guthi* associations is as important, if not more so, than that of the small patrilineal *kawaḥ*. In my opinion the former constitute the most original aspect of the social organisation of the Newar painter caste. In Bhaktapur, where the old forms of the *guthi* appear to have been better preserved than elsewhere, the Citrakār generally belong to two *guthi* simultaneously: the *sī guthi*, 'the *guthi* of the dead' (or 'the death *guthi'*),[8] and the *deślā guthi* (elsewhere *deśanāḥ guthi)* 'the *guthi* of the locality'. Of the two, the death *guthi* is, without doubt, the more important nowadays. This organisation is essential for the proper integration of the community. To be excluded from one's *sī guthi* is to be excluded from one's lineage and one's caste.

For the twenty-one Citrakār households in Bhaktapur,[9] there are two *sī guthi*: the *taḥdhā guthi*, which in spite of its name (meaning, 'big *guthi')* is the smaller of the two, and the *bhailaḥ guthi* (or *bhairav guthi).* The former comprises eight households, seven in Tacapāl and one in Dugu Malla, these two quarters *(twāḥ*; Nep. *ṭol)* being situated in the higher *(cway)* part of the town. The second *guthi* is made up of thirteen Bhaktapur Citrakār households (in Taumāḍhī, Nāsumanā, Tacapāl and Gaḥchē) and one in Sankhu, a small town situated in the north-east of the Kathmandu Valley. It is said that originally there were five Citrakār *sī guthi* in Bhaktapur; at the beginning of the century there were still three. The last survivors of this third *guthi*, called *lākulāchē guthi*,[10] apparently preferred to join up with the other two *guthi* rather than have to bear the heavy costs of an organisation reduced to a small number of members.

The principal function of the *sī guthi* is to organise the funerals of its members, the *guthiyār*. It has to oversee the transfer of the corpse to the funeral pyre as well as take care of the cremation itself. It is also charged with dispersing the final remains of the body to the four corners of the

8 *Sī guthi*: from *siye*: 'to die'.

9 These figures were collected in 1974. R. Levy (1990: 97), who stayed in Bhaktapur some years later, gives figure of 25 Citrakār households.

10 Lākulāchē is a locality situated in the south of the town.

Kathmandu Valley. The duties of the *guthiyār* are very precise: when a death occurs in one of the households of the *guthi*, the close relatives of the deceased immediately hasten to announce the death to all the *guthiyār*. The news must be conveyed as quickly as possible because no part of the funeral proceedings can be undertaken before all the *guthi* members (one or two per household) have gathered in the house of the deceased. When any *guthiyār* cannot justify their absence, they are required to pay fines.

The *guthiyār* have to bring with them several objects indispensable for the proper running of the funeral ceremony. First is the yellow shroud *(dewā)* which covers the corpse. This shroud is kept either in the house of the *thakāli* (the senior-most member of the *guthi)*, or in the house of the *guthiyār* who is responsible for *guthi* affairs for that year. There is only one shroud for all the members of the *guthi*; a few minutes before lighting the funeral pyre, it is taken off the corpse and put away until another death in the group occurs. The *guthiyār* also have to bring nine sheaves of wheat straw *(chwāli)* used to burn the body. Among the other objects brought at this time, the following should be mentioned: a mat *(pulu)*[11] which is used to wrap the corpse in; stalks of bamboo *(ti)* that are put in the mouth of the dead body and used to light the pyre; a terracotta pot *(bhājã)*; some rice husks *(mwa)*, and different types of incense *(dhupāṃy)* brought from Newar Ayurvedic doctors *(vaidya)*. Having arrived at the house of the deceased, the *guthiyār* begin by constructing the bamboo bier called *kūtāḥ* in Newar[12] on which the corpse will be transported. At the head and foot of the *kūtāḥ* they fix small flags coloured red and white at regular intervals; then, before the procession leaves, the *guthiyār* cook some rice just in front of the house of the deceased in a terracotta pot placed on top of three bricks. This rice, called *kaḥti jā*, will be offered to the soul of the dead person before the cremation.

The funeral procession, which goes from the town to the cremation site *(dīpa)*,[13] follows a very strictly pre-ordained pattern and every *guthiyār* has a particular place in it which is fixed by tradition. At the head of the procession come nine members of the *guthi*, each of whom holds a sheaf of wheat straw, some bamboo, and material for offerings.

11 *Pulu* (New.) = *māndro* (Nep.) according to Joshi (1956: 160); for *māndro*, Turner (1931: 504) gives 'cane mat, large mat made of bamboo'.

12 Joshi (1956: 36) translates *kūtāḥ* in Nepali as follows: *bāṃsko bharen*; *murdā laijāne khaṭ* = 'frame made of bamboo, wood to carry a corpse'.

13 *Dīpa*: Joshi (1956: 130) gives the Nepali glosses *masān*, *cyān*, 'cremation site, cemetery'.

Behind them, another *guthiyār* carries a terracotta pot containing smouldering rice husks. He is followed by a married daughter of the family of the deceased *(mhyāy macā)* who has to throw rice and paddy along the route of the procession.[14] Then, some distance behind them, comes the bier carried on the shoulders of four *guthiyār*, the *thakāli* ('seniors') in the front and the *kwaḥkāli* ('juniors') in the rear. At the end of the procession come the close relatives of the dead person, followed by the other members of the *guthi*. Once at the cremation site, the *guthiyār* sprinkle the corpse with water *(laḥ twankegu*; lit, 'to give water to drink'),[15] construct the funeral pyre, and place the body on it. The wood is provided by the *guthi*. The organisation has a small store at its disposal where the wood needed for cremations is kept.

Once the pyre has been lit by the son of the deceased *(mitaimha*; lit. 'the person who puts the fire'), the close relatives go to purify themselves in the river close by before returning to their respective homes. Only the *guthiyār* stay by the pyre to the very end to ensure that the corpse is fully burnt. A messenger is sent to the relatives of the deceased to announce that the cremation is finished; this news lifts the fast which is observed by all the *phuki*, that is, the patrilineal relatives of the deceased. Immediately after this, or on the following day, these same *phuki* return to the cremation ground and make an effigy of the deceased with ash.[16] The *guthiyār* are again obliged to be present at this time in order to collect the remains of the corpse, to throw some of it in the river and to carry the rest to various well-known pilgrimage sites in the Kathmandu Valley.[17] Finally, in the days following the cremation, both the men and the women of the *guthi* come to present their condolences to the family of the deceased. This ceremony is called *thika wanigu* in

14 Among high castes, this person is replaced by a *jyāpuni*, a woman of the Maharjan caste (Nepali 1965: 128).

15 Nepali (1965: 130).

16 'Next morning all persons who had accompanied the funeral procession return to the burning place. They make an effigy of the deceased out of his ashes. Two small *Ritha* seeds *(Sapindus Mukorossi)* are used to represent the eyes of the effigy and a conch to represent its mouth. They take five heaps of *bajee* [flattened rice] and boiled rice which are kept at five different places around the effigy—at the legs, hands and one at the head' (Nepali 1965: 133). This custom is followed by urban Maharjans but not by the impure castes.

17 Nepali (1965: 133) writes: 'Two of the *sana guthi* members are sent to Gokarna with the scalp, two to Sankhamool with one of the shoulder joints, two to Tekdwan [Tekudoban] with the other shoulder joint and the sixth person, first to Lakha Tirtha and then to Bhacha Khusi with the knee caps. Places of such disposal are known as the various *tirtha* of the Valley and are sacred both to the Hindus and the Buddhists.'

Bhaktapur and *bicāḥ wanegu* in Kathmandu.

Funerals are not the only occasions when the *sī guthi* manifests its unity and solidarity. Every year, on a fixed date, the members of the organisation gather together in full strength for a feast *(bhway)* which takes place in the house of the *guthiyār* who is in charge of the *guthi* for that year. I will describe the way in which this ceremony unfolds among the Citrakār of Bhaktapur.

About twenty years ago, the members of the *taḥdhā guthi* used to gather together three times a year—on the occasion of Śrī Pañcamī (the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Māgh: January-February); for Pāṃ Caḥray (or Ghoḍā Jātrā, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Caitra: March-April); and for Akṣaya Tṛtīyā (during Baiśākh: April-May). Nowadays the *guthi* meets only once a year, for Śrī Pañcamī. The festival lasts four days and at least two members of each household must take part. On the first day, the family in charge of the *guthi* obtains the necessary provisions and prepares the dishes for the feast. The second day is the most important since it is the day of the feast itself. Before the meal, all the members of the organisation, as well as a Buddhist Vajrācārya priest called specially for the occasion, worship the statue of the tutelary deity of the *guthi*: the Buddhist Tantric deity, Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa. Over the course of the preceding year this deity would have been kept behind a curtain, on the top floor of the house, away from prying eyes and the impure.[18] On the day of Śrī Pañcamī, it is exhibited to all of the *guthiyār*, who worship it with incense, water, and vermilion.

The feast takes place in an atmosphere marked by gravity and reserve and seems almost religious. All the members of the *sī guthi* are there, including wives and children. To emphasise the social importance of the gathering, plates and bowls are set down for those who are absent, with their places dictated by where they fall in the association's hierarchy. Those who are serving the food take care to make sure that some of each dish is served on each absent member's plate. The organisation of the feast falls totally on the *guthiyār* in charge for that year. The expenses are later shared among all the members of the organisation. During the meal, the guests discuss the quality of the food and alcohol being served. It is a great insult for the host to see any of his dishes being refused by a guest.

18 A Citrakār informant in Lalitpur has told me that in his *sī guthi*, the tutelary deity is kept hidden behind the yellow shroud *(dewā)* which is used to cover dead bodies.

On the third day of the ceremony, the task of taking charge of the *guthi* is transferred to another *guthiyār (pāḥ biyegu*, lit. 'to give the turn to') according to the system of rotation worked out by the group. Finally, on the fourth day, the accounts of the organisation are gone over, subscriptions are collected, and the cult objects and the statue of the tutelary deity transferred to the house of the *guthiyār* who will be in charge of organising the same feast the following year. If there has been a birth within the *guthi* during the preceding year, an offering is also made on this day to Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa. This offering is called *kisalī*: it is made up of rice, nuts, and a one-paisā coin.

The members of the second *sī guthi* of the Citrakār of Bhaktapur, the *bhailaḥ guthi*, also gather together once a year for a feast. The feast takes place between the second and fourth days of the bright fortnight of the month of Baiśākh (April-May). The proceedings of the ceremony are in every respect identical to those just described. The only difference is in the name of the tutelary deity of the *guthi*, which in this case is called Mahābhairava. A bronze statue of this divinity is worshipped in the presence of a Vajrācārya priest. The *nāyaḥ*, that is, the *guthi* elders, sacrifice a goat in front of the Bhairava temple in Taumāḍhī ṭol. While the tutelary deity of the *taḥdhā guthi* does not accept animal sacrifices, that of the *bhailaḥ guthi* is carnivorous and is offered blood and alcohol.[19]

How does recruitment into the '*guthi* of the dead' take place? As a general rule, membership of the organisation is hereditary: children belong to the *guthi* of their father. When a daughter marries, she leaves the *sī guthi* of her parents and joins that of her parents-in-law by paying an entrance fee which is fixed by tradition. But this hereditary transmission does not always take place automatically. Thus, young people who set up independent households after marriage are required to confirm their membership of the *guthi* by making over to it a sum of 20 rupees. It often happens that parents and children quarrel with each other and the children can take advantage of a change in place of residence to escape from the influence of their family and seek admission into another *guthi*. This is very frequent in Lalitpur and Kathmandu since there are many *guthi* in these two conurbations to choose from. In Bhaktapur, changing one's *guthi* is a more delicate affair; the organisation to which a request

19 In Lalitpur, five of the six *sī guthi* organise their feast on the day of the Śrī Pañcamī (Māgh, *śukla* 5) while the remaining *guthi* has its feast on Phāgu Punhī (the full moon day of the month of Phālgun). The *guthi* feast used to last six days; nowadays everything takes place on a single day.

for admission has been made will consult the other *sī guthi* in the town before coming to a decision. If it seems that admission will not cause ruptures within the *guthi*, the candidate will be accepted; if, on the contrary, the admission risks bringing dissensions in its wake, it will not agree to the request. The decision is not, therefore, free and autonomous. Admission into a *sī guthi* does not really become anonymous and voluntary until the number of associations in a locality becomes sufficiently high.

When a Citrakār family changes place of residence and goes to live in a neighbouring town, it almost always leaves its *guthi* of origin and affiliates itself to a local organisation. The amount of the entrance fee required depends very much on the *sī guthi* in question. In some cases, the fee is nominal (a ritual offering of *kisalī*); in other cases, it can reach 200 rupees. Changing a *guthi* when one changes a place of residence is a solution to a major anxiety: when funerals occur, the cremation has to take place as quickly as possible. One must, therefore, be able to count on the *guthiyār* who, as we have seen, are indispensable to the proceedings and who have to be present with the minimum possible delay. Rather than count on a kinship group scattered all over the Valley, the Newar prefer to have a local organisation all of whose members can be contacted easily and quickly when the need arises.

Dissensions within families and migration inside the Kathmandu Valley have led, as the generations have gone by, to a very great mixing up of the population. In Bhaktapur, an estimated 20 per cent of the *guthiyār* have recently moved into the town; less than a generation ago, they were still living in neighbouring settlements such as Banepa, Sankhu, or Dhulikhel. In Kathmandu, which has been a centre of attraction for the last twenty years or so for Citrakārs in search of new employment opportunities, this mixing up of the death *guthi* has reached new levels. Now it is not uncommon for these organisations to be composed of as many new arrivals as original inhabitants of the capital.

Today, then, the Citrakār *sī guthi* is neither a lineage nor a clan.[20] The

20 However, the structure of *sī guthi* of the Citrakār of Lalitpur seems to be modelled on the old lineage organisation of the town. Informants there still give a list of six *sī guthi*, corresponding in every detail to the list of six lineages (and their corresponding residential areas) cited above. In general, relations between the patrilineal kinship groups and the *sī guthi* funerary associations vary somewhat. In some cases, they either coincide or overlap very considerably (e.g., the peasants of Pyangaon and Theco). In other cases, the links are rather tenuous (Gellner 1992: 246). On this point, see also Fürer-Haimendorf (1956: 30), who was the first to draw attention to the lineage character of many of the Newar funerary associations.

members are not all *phuki*, which is to say that they are not all attached by links of patrilineal kinship. Marriage alliances within the group are not prohibited as long as they fall outside a sufficient number of generations, which, as we saw above, is between five and seven, though this is often transgressed. Neither can the '*guthi* of the dead' be reduced to a residential group. A good illustration of this comes from the following story of a Citrakār family, originally from Sankhu, which was told to me in Bhaktapur.

> About twenty-five years ago, a Citrakār from Sankhu came to Bhaktapur, where he had to appear in court about a land tenure matter. Some days after his arrival in Bhaktapur, this Citrakār fell seriously ill and died soon afterwards, probably from an attack of cholera. The authorities in the town called the local Citrakār to take charge of the body. The latter agreed to this and sent a messenger to Sankhu to announce the death of his family. The son of the deceased came as soon as possible to Bhaktapur and, with the help of the *bhailaḥ guthi* Citrakār, burnt the body according to customary religious rites.[21] Then this family, finding itself to be the last Citrakār household in Sankhu, asked the *bhailaḥ guthi* if they could join their association. Their request was granted and, since then, we, the Citrakār of the *bhailaḥ guthi*, have to go to Sankhu when a death occurs in this family. On the other hand, every time that a death takes place in our *guthi*, a Citrakār from Sankhu is under obligation to come to Bhaktapur.

Exceptional conditions can, then, break the territorial unity of the *guthi* and the group may have members in several different localities. There is one other fundamental rule here: the members of a 'death *guthi*' must belong to the same caste. This rule is absolute and unbreakable. It is for this reason that, in spite of the distance separating the two towns of Bhaktapur and Sankhu, the Citrakār of Sankhu have had to affiliate to the *bhailaḥ guthi* of Bhaktapur when it would have been more convenient for them to join a local *guthi* made of Śreṣṭhas or Maharjans.

21 Should one accept this part of the story unreservedly or could it be a mistake on the part of the narrator? It is a well-known fact that, in principle, Newar bury lepers and those who die of cholera and smallpox, as is the case in India (cf. Stevenson 1920: 153). It is not, however, the first time that I have come across such deviations; in Pyangaon, a Maharjan village in the south of the Kathmandu Valley where I spent several months (cf. Chapters 4 and 5), people dying of cholera and smallpox were burnt if they were more than three years old.

There exist other organisations alongside the *sī guthi* which play an important role when a death occurs. For example, among the Citrakār of Lalitpur, two different *guthi* share the duties connected with funerals: the *sī guthi* and the *sanāḥ guthi*.[22] In this city, a Citrakār may, in principle, belong to both of these associations simultaneously. For the *guthiyār*, the essential difference between the two groups lies in the fact that the members of the *sanāḥ guthi* leave the cremation site as soon as the pyre is lit while the members of the *sī guthi* have to remain there to ensure that the body is fully burnt. Nowadays, members of the *sanāḥ guthi* do not play any other active role during the ceremony although they may assist members of the *sī guthi* in carrying the bier. Their functions are very symbolic: above all, their presence marks their sympathy towards the family of the deceased. The *sanāḥ guthi* may also provide some financial support to the close relatives of the deceased. This organisation possesses, like the *sī guthi*, an internal hierarchy and administrative structure which are quite well developed. However, it does not own any landed or other immovable goods; any expenses it incurs are met through the annual contributions of the members (in 1974, 15-20 rupees).

The Citrakār say that the *sī guthi* is more important than the *sanāḥ guthi*. Today, only those who are well-off belong to this latter organisation while affiliation to a *sī guthi* is mandatory for all, even the poorest. What purpose, then, does the *sanāḥ guthi* serve? In principle, it is a charitable institution which assumes the responsibility of assisting the family of the deceased, both psychologically and financially, at the time of death. By being present at the annual gatherings and the feasts of the *guthi*, by worshipping the tutelary divinity, and by contributing subscriptions and making donations, the *guthiyār* displays his piety; he accumulates merit which will perhaps help him to be reborn in a superior form in a future life. Moreover, by these acts of charity and piety, not only are the evils of the future alleviated, but one also acquires prestige in one's present life in the eyes of the community. One joins a *sanāḥ guthi* to present a 'respectable image' and to improve one's social standing, for which there are, of course, obvious parallels with certain societies and clubs in the western world.

22 *Sanāḥ guthi*: from New. *sanāḥ*, which Manandhar (1986: 247) derives from Skt. *snāna*, 'bath'. Joshi (1956: 249) glosses *sanā* as '*malāmī*; *malāmī jānu*'. Turner translates *malāmī* as 'a mourner' and *malām* as 'the funeral procession to the place of cremation' (1931: 495).

***Deślā* (or *Deśanāḥ) Guthi:* The '*Guthi* of the locality'**

The second type of *guthi* which exists among the Citrakār of Bhaktapur is called the *deślā guthi*. The word *deś* means 'country, town, village'.[23] This *guthi* unites all the Citrakār of the town. The organisation is led by five *nāyaḥ* (or *thakāli)*, the five oldest painters of Bhaktapur. It meets every year on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of Māgh (January-February).[24] Early in the morning of this day, the five *nāyaḥ* sacrifice a goat in front of the temple of Hinara Ganedyaḥ, also known as Sūrya Bināyak, which is situated to the south of Bhaktapur. In the past, all the Citrakār of the town gathered here and feasted in front of the temple. At present only the elders of the *guthi* take part in the ceremony, and after a light snack *(samay)* of beaten rice and soya beans, they make their way back to the town. The *guthi* feast is rotated among the twenty-one households of the Bhaktapur Citrakār.

The *deślā guthi* has some financial assets but for the most part it is maintained by members' subscriptions of between 25 to 30 rupees a year. One person, chosen by the five *nāyaḥ* of the *guthi*, presides over the association for a period which, is principle, should not exceed seven years. This person is given the title of *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ*, and is chosen on the basis of his professional qualities without regard to seniority. It is the quality of the artist that is rewarded; the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* is considered the best painter in the town. The position affords him considerable advantages: he has a virtual monopoly on all the contracts made with the Guṭhi Saṃsthān, the government agency which regulates those *guthi* under state control.

In Bhaktapur, the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* has the task of painting the eyes of Bhairava on the wheels of the chariot used during Bisket Jātrā,[25] as well as painting the face of the same deity on a bamboo mat called *bhakhāri* which is hung on the facade of the Bhairava temple at Taumāḍhī ṭol. He also has to make and paint the masks worn for the dance of the Nava Durgā during Mwaḥni (Nep. Dasaī), and those of the five Buddhas (Pañca Buddha) that are carried through the streets of the town during

23 *Deś (des)*: 'a country' (Turner 1931: 319). In Newar (and Nepali), the word *deś* carries much the same sense as the French word *pays,* which applies equally to a locality and a country.

24 This day is the eve of the full moon and is called Sī Punhī in Newar (in Bhaktapur, Chyālā Punhī). For information on this festival, see Anderson (1977: 229-30).

25 The festival of Bisket Jātrā takes place on the *saṃkrānti* (the first day of the solar month) of Baiśākh (April-May). On this occasion, the chariots of Bhairava and Bhadrakālī are pulled through the street of the town. See Levy (1990: Chapter 14).

Pañcadān,[26] on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of Bhādra (August-September). Finally, he used to have the responsibility for the upkeep of the wonderful frescoes of Taleju Bhavanī, and for Nyātāpol (the five-roofed temple), the Bhairava temple, and so on. These responsibilities represent important contracts. For the annual construction of the twelve Nava Durgā masks alone he receives three *muri* of *saruwā jāki* (a mixture of paddy and husked rice), i.e., about 170 kilos of dry grain. For the painting of Bhairava on wickerwork for Indra Jātrā, which takes place on the full moon of the month of Bhādra (August-September), he is paid nine *pāthī* of paddy.[27] In 1974, it was Vishnu Bahadur Citrakār (of Tacapāl) of the *taḥdhā sī guthi*, who had the monopoly on all these contracts.

The *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* also has an important role in the decision-making in the '*guthi* of the locality'. In the final analysis, it is he who decides to exclude someone from the organisation, and thereby from the caste. As soon as the sanction has been made, the *guthiyār* are obliged to refrain from sharing cooked rice with the person who has been excluded. In spite of the powers and privileges he holds, the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* is nevertheless himself not safe from the sanctions of his own *deślā guthi*. Vishnu Bahadur's predecessor, Suku Bahadur, was himself excluded from the caste because he had married a *jyāpuni*, a woman of the Newar farming caste. When he died, not one Citrakār was present at his funeral nor took part in the purification ceremony *(ghaḥsū)* that takes place on the twelfth day after the cremation.

What is the role of the 'locality *guthi*'? Traditionally, the function of this *guthi* was to ensure a strict endogamy within the caste; all members who married women of lower caste were excluded. It also imposed fines on those *guthiyār* who had sexual relations with women from impure castes. Today, with the caste system no longer having the backing of the legal system, and with inter-caste marriages no longer being punishable in the eyes of the law, these cases of exclusion are becoming rarer, or at least more discreet.

The *deślā guthi* also has the function of regulating economic competition among its members and dividing the clientele of the locality. In Bhaktapur, as we have seen, this association nominates someone, the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ*, who has a monopoly over all the most important con-

26 On this festival, see Nepali (1965: 357), Slusser (1982: i. 302-3), Toffin (1984: 525-6), and Gellner (1992: 180-6).

27 A *pāthī* is a measurement equivalent to 8 *mānā*. One *pāthī* of paddy weighs approximately 2.5 kg.

tracts for a certain period. Whether it is a question of establishing a system of monopoly or one of rotation, the *deślā guthi* assigns a precise role to everyone and prevents free competition. All economic relations which tie the Citrakār to other castes, both in Newar and Parbatiyā society, are tightly controlled by this association: it is the five *nāyaḥ* of the *guthi* and the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* who make sure that Vajrācārya priests are found for the domestic ceremonies of all the *guthiyār*, and that Khaḍgī butchers will be present at their sacrifices and purification ceremonies.

In principle, it is also this *guthi* which is charged with defending the interests of the group in its relations with the government and the city council (Nagar Pañcāyat). The corporatism of the '*guthi* of the locality' is also reinforced by the financial facilities this association accords in some cases to its members; *guthiyār* thus have the right to low interest, and even interest-free, loans.[28] This permits artisans to make investments, improve their techniques, and, in so doing, to adapt to the requirements of modern living. The association also comes to the help of the least well-off in the group by giving them donations. A relief fund helps families which have seen sickness or death. One can, then, really speak of a corporation, with all the social, economic, and political implications that entails. The *deślā guthi* is an association with a corporatist character which maintains the unity and solidarity of the caste at the level of the locality.

This solidarity is equally well expressed on the socio-religious front: the members of the organisation have to demonstrate their unity by being present at the funerals of all *guthiyār* and by following the funeral procession as far as the cremation site. However, while the members of the *sī guthi* have to stay at the cremation ground until the corpse is completely burnt, the members of the *deślā guthi*, like those of the *sanāḥ guthi*, return home once the *mitaimha* has set fire to the pyre. Some days after the funeral, the women of the *deślā guthi* have to present their condolences when they come to weep at the house of the deceased *(bicāḥ wanegu*, or *thika wanigu* in Bhaktapur Newar). They bring with them salt, grains of rice, ginger, and black pepper, all of which are offered to the spirit of the deceased.

Previously the Citrakār of Lalitpur and Kathmandu also had associations similar to the *deślā guthi*. In Lalitpur, where I was able to obtain detailed information, the *guthi* of the locality, here called *deśanāḥ guthi*, was led by five *thakāli* (the five oldest Citrakār men in the town) and two

28 Colin Rosser makes the same remark about the *sanāḥ guthi* (1966: 97).

305·85496
ACC NO
18045

nāyaḥ called the *khaypi nāyaḥ* and the *chayapi nāyaḥ*.[29] The *khaypi nāyaḥ* was the appointed intermediary between the Citrakār of Lalitpur and the central authorities. It was he who distributed the orders of the Guṭhi Saṃsthān concerning religious paintings and who mobilised the required manpower in the community for certain obligatory works decreed by the state. He was a notable whose title had to be confirmed by the authorities and who prided himself on his links with the higher echelons of the administration in the kingdom. The role of the *chayapi nāyaḥ* was to ensure that religious rules were respected inside the group. With the agreement of the five *thakāli*, he could exclude from the caste any Citrakār found guilty of an unacceptable marriage alliance.

Unlike Bhaktapur, these two posts of *nāyaḥ* were transmitted hereditarily, from father to eldest son. An initiation rite called *nāyaḥ luyegu*, relatively similar to the rite organised for the lineage heads *(thakāli luyegu)*, was organised at the time of their investiture. If the presumptive heir was thought to be incapable of assuming this responsibility, the five *thakāli* got together and assigned the function to another Citrakār. The *chayapi nāyaḥ* could also be dismissed by his peers for gross religious failings. The '*guthi* of the locality' met once a year on the day of Rām Navamī, the ninth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Caitra (March-April) during Cait Dasaĩ.[30] A sacrifice was offered to the goddess Mahālakṣmī in Lagankhel to the south of the town, after which a feast was partaken of together. The food, of which there was plenty, would be carried by Maharjans.

As in Bhaktapur, the *deśanāḥ guthi* (from *deś*, 'locality', and most probably *sanāḥ*, 'funeral procession') of the Lalitpur Citrakār also had functions to perform when deaths occurred. Its members had to display their sympathy in some way or the other when one of their number passed away. According to many informants, the *deśanāḥ guthi* was simply the coming together of the town's *sī guthi*. Now that the '*guthi* of the locality' has disappeared, it is the *sī guthi* that regulates social matters in the local caste group. In ancient times it seems it was the *sanāḥ guthi* which

29 These two titles, *khyapi* and *chyapi nāyaḥ*, are probably derived from *khyapi* and *chyapi* (New.), plates of vegetables, composed of radishes and pumpkins, which are among the eight dishes *(cyāku ghāsātā)* served at ceremonial feasts *(bhway)*. The same is presumably true of the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* of Bhaktapur (local pronunciation). It is not clear how these vegetable dishes have come to designate Citrakār notables.

30 It is on the same day, and in the same place, that the Lalitpur Citrakār *sanāḥ guthis* have their annual meetings.

played the role of '*guthi* of the locality'. The connection between funerary rituals and social control over caste affairs seems to me to be fundamental. What it demonstrates is that death *guthi* are the structural pillar of Citrakār society, its ultimate foundation, as is the case for many other Newar castes.[31]

In Lalitpur and Kathmandu, the *deśanāḥ guthi* have almost disappeared. Population growth, numerous changes of residence, inter-caste marriages, and new economic conditions have profoundly upset the communal traditions of the Citrakār of these two towns. Today there is no more *khaypi nāyaḥ* or *chayapi nāyaḥ*. The *deśanāḥ guthi* of Lalitpur is now only a memory while that of Kathmandu does not comprise more than 30 or so members. How is this disaffection to be explained? For the most part, it is due to recent changes in residence. In 1974, about a third of the Citrakār in Kathmandu had been living in the city for only one generation. These newcomers, after leaving the *deśanāḥ guthi* of their original locality, have not attempted to affiliate with a new group. As a matter of fact, entry into a *guthi* is always delicate and costly: a not inconsiderable sum—between 200 and 300 rupees in Kathmandu—has to be paid to become a fully-fledged *guthiyār* and the association's rules oblige the newly inscribed member to take charge of the expenses of organising the annual feast as soon as he is admitted. Secondly, the increase in inter-caste marriages has considerably weakened the degree of social control in the community: the *thakāli* and the *nāyaḥ* are no longer able to lay down the law as they used to.

There is also the fact, as young people see it, that the *guthi* have lost their religious significance; the annual gatherings are judged tiresome and of no interest. The new possibilities offered by economic modernization—photography, advertising, industrial art—have progressively undermined the narrow constraints of *guthi* corporatism. Forms of mutual aid and corporate associations are now seen merely as obstacles to the forces of economic development. Individualistic tendencies are beginning to appear, particularly among those Citrakār who have moved into the capital from outside. Finally, in Lalitpur, another factor has played a role in this process of disintegration: there have been serious internal quarrels, connected with the initiation ceremony *(nāyaḥ luyegu)* of the

31 Cf. Toffin (1984: Chapters 7 and 8), Quigley (1985*b*), Gellner (1992: 246-7) and Ishii (1996). See also the interesting remarks on the Mānandhars of Kathmandu by van den Hoek and Shrestha (1992: 64-5). In this book, cf. Chapter 9.

two *nāyaḥ* of the Citrakār community, which have undermined the solidarity of the *guthiyār* and have caused the *deśanāḥ guthi* to break up.

My portrait of the social organisation of the Citrakār would be incomplete if I did not mention the custom of the *jāt bhway*. This is a feast given by a Citrakār for all the members of his caste living in the Kathmandu Valley. Such an event normally coincides either with the performance of a life-cycle rite of one of the host's family members or with the inauguration of a *caitya (cibhāḥ busādhā)*. The great-grandfather of the present *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* of Bhaktapur organised a feast of this kind in the last century: 108 animals (buffaloes, goats, and ducks) were consumed. The gathering took place in the open air at Yãsikhel, to the south of Bhaktapur, at the spot where the ceremonial *yaḥsī* pole is erected during Bisket Jātrā. Traditionally, the remaining food was to be conserved for four days in a closed room, then 'tasted' *(cipā thikegu)* by the household head, and finally distributed to poor people. To patronise a *jāt bhway* was a means of garnering prestige on a large scale and could normally only be undertaken by a wealthy man or a *nāyaḥ*.

Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this brief analysis of the two most important Citrakār *guthi* in the Kathmandu Valley?[32] First of all, it must be understood, that the *deślā* (or *deśanāḥ) guthi* is a kind of association which is widespread in Newar society; it is found with almost the same features among a number of other Newar castes. Take, for example, the *de ācārya guthi* of the Vajrācārya Buddhist priests about which Colin Rosser (1966: 116ff) has given us a very vivid picture. In Kathmandu,

32 Other *guthi*, established to ensure the performance of an annual ritual or festival, or dedicated to the worship of a particular deity, existed among the Citrakār. Let me give two examples. (1) In Lalitpur, five *sālhū* (or *sānhū) guthi*s are linked to the worship of Būga Dyaḥ (Matsyendranāth) on the first day of the month according to the solar calendar. Members of these associations visit the shrines of Būga Dyaḥ in Bungamati or Lalitpur in turns and worship the deity. When returning, the *guthiyār* distributes to other members of the group the offerings of leaves, flowers, and food which have been blessed by the gods *(prasād)* and have a meal. All the members are Citrakār and membership is purely optional. For this *guthi*, see also Gellner (1992: 243). (2) In Bhaktapur, there are three *pañcadān* (or *pādrāṃ) guthi*, each of which is made up of three or four Citrakār households. These associations give alms consisting of some *pāthī* of paddy to Śākyas and Vajrācāryas on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra for the Buddhist festival of Pañcadān. The *pañcadān guthiyār* erect altars in their quarter of the town and make offerings to the five Buddhas when the procession passes in front of them. In 1974, the *thakāli* of one of these *pañcadān guthi* was the *khyaḥpi nāyaḥ* of Bhaktapur. Some of these associations have *guthi* lands; membership in them is purely optional.

this *guthi* comprise all the Vajrācārya of the city who have gone through the initiation ritual of *ācāḥ luyegu*, which is generally performed between the ages of eight and ten. The association meets every year on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Caitra (March-April) behind the Swayambhū *stūpa* at the Tantric shrine called Śāntipur. It is run by eighteen *thakāli*, each of whom represents one of the main Buddhist monasteries (New. *mū bāhāḥ*) in Kathmandu.

The *de ācārya guthi* has strict control over the recruitment of its members and, just like the *deślā guthi* of the Citrakār, regulates the sharing out of clients among the *guthiyār*. A very precise body of laws prevents competition from developing among the priests and sanctions are imposed on those who do not respect the rules. If a Vajrācārya is accused of illegal competition, it is even possible to refuse his children the right to take part in the ritual of *ācāḥ luyegu*, which is the real marker of access into the Vajrācārya caste. Another resemblance with the Citrakār is that the *de ācāya guthi* is headed by someone called the *lāy guruju*, on whom all important decisions devolve. This title is hereditary, with one family from Maru *twāḥ* having a monopoly on the position.[33] The example of the Vajrācārya is not unique; among the Mānandhar (oil-pressers), the same kind of organisation, with the same corporatist characteristics, could be found some years ago, and, in their case, perhaps even more accentuated. For many Newar castes, and particularly the artisan castes, the 'locality *guthi*' (or 'local caste *guthi*') represent an ideal method of regulating social problems that are caused by competition within a closed economic system.

The *deślā guthi* also brings to mind the caste councils *(pañcāyat)* which have been widely reported in India,[34] though there are important differences. There are, or were until recently, four Citrakār *deślā guthi* for the whole of the Kathmandu Valley, one in each of the following towns: Thimi, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu. These four *deślā guthi* have few relations with each other; decisions are taken at the level of the

33 For more details on the *de ācārya guthi* and the *lāy guruji* (or *rāj gubhāju*), see Locke (1985: 253-7, 260-2). As Gellner (1992: 237-8) has recently remarked, following Locke (1985), this Vajrācārya *guthi* has never been able to impose its will on its members in religious matters. Furthermore, the Vajrācārya of Lalitpur and Bhaktapur do not have this type of association. However, contrary to what Gellner (1992: 237) reports, I have always taken care to point out the differences between these 'locality *guthis*' and true caste councils (Toffin 1984: 215).

34 On this subject, see, for example Blunt (1931). Inden (1976: 46) notes that, in the past, in Bengal the word *goṣṭhi* (from which the word *guthi* is derived) was used to mean caste council, or *sabhā*.

locality and not at the level of the caste. There is no overall machinery or supreme authority for all of the Citrakār in the Kathmandu Valley. The caste does not appear as a group which is solidary or united as a whole; in all cases, territorial affiliations take precedence. The only index of caste unity is the custom of the *jāt bhway*, 'caste feast'. But this meeting has no legal existence and no corporate character. Furthermore, no decisions are made on this occasion. As shown earlier, it serves above all as a vehicle for the host to improve his personal standing in the community and to accumulate religious merit by performing a charitable deed. One hosts a *jāt bhway* for the same reasons that one joins a *sanāḥ guthi*: for prestige.

In general, the role played by residence in Newar society is fundamental and cannot be reduced to other factors.[35] For example, among the Citrakār, as among the Maharjan and the Mānandhar, kinship groups tend to be absorbed by groups based on residence and by the *guthi* ritual associations. The formation of small territorial units turned in on themselves is a hallmark of Newar society (Toffin 1984: 592). It is possible that this introversion owes something to the extreme political fragmentation that characterised the Kathmandu Valley during the mediaeval periods, particularly from 1480 to 1768. At a time when the Newar were very developed economically, it is likely that incessant quarrels and fighting between the three Malla kingdoms of the Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur), and the privileges each king jealously sought to maintain for his own territory, played an important part in the formation of cloistered social units, at least at the level of the city.

Residence is also important, if not quite to the same degree of exclusivity, in the death or cremation *guthi* and in the other associations connected with funerals. More precisely, these associations have a hybrid character: they are not defined exclusively by either kinship or residence, but by a mixture of the two. They recall those forms of social organisation which Claude Lévi-Strauss (1984: 192-9) has called 'house societies' *(sociétés à maisons)*. As in many societies, both European and Asian, Newar social organisation is characterised by a relatively shallow genealogical memory, a clear distinction between the close kin of the household head and other agnates *(phuki/tāpā phuki)*, marriage circles among

35 Fürer-Haimendorf was the first to give prominence to this factor in Newar society (1956: 36-8). Dumont (1964) has also discussed this point. More recently, one should see Quigley (1986).

kin who are neither too close nor too distant, and a marked division between elders and juniors (cf. Lamaison 1987: 36). I would endorse Lévi-Strauss's suggestion that this kind of structure expresses a situation where political and economic interests tend to intrude upon the social field: 'In this kind of social organisation one can discern the conscious intention of remaining open to historical development' (Lévi-Strauss 1991: 436). But it would require a major comparative study fully to situate the Newar *sī guthi* from this perspective.

For a complete understanding of the *sī guthi,* one must also bear in mind beliefs concerning death and impurity, beliefs which the Newar have derived in large part from Hinduism. A death is an event of the utmost seriousness; it upsets the order of the family and of society at large. To restore this order, one should be particularly attentive to the rituals carried out on this occasion. For when a death occurs, the soul of the deceased does not go directly to the kingdom of Yama, the god of death. At first, it wanders around in this world. Its attachments to the living are not yet ruptured and it lingers on in the house of the deceased's kin.[36] During this period, the soul of the deceased, called *preta*, is unhappy; it is separated from the body and can neither get up nor sit down; neither can it eat because its throat, it is said, is as narrow as the eye of a needle.[37] Because it is unhappy, the *preta* is dangerous to its relatives. Dissatisfied, hungry, and thirsty, it might find some way to vent its discontent. All of the post-funerary rites have the underlying function of distancing the *preta* from its natal household and leading it to the kingdom of Yama where it can join the benevolent manes. It takes just one mistake, however minute, in performing the rituals to cause the *preta* to be prevented from ever entering this kingdom and be condemned to tormenting the living.

One other belief helps to explain the speed with which the *guthiyār* have to get together and complete the cremation. When someone dies, the soul goes to make a preliminary visit to Yama. This is to make sure that there will be no mistake when it comes to the moment of judgement by the king of the dead.[38] Satisfied with this inspection, the soul returns

36 For India, there is a good description of the beliefs concerning death in Stevenson (1920: 156-92). See also Parry (1980).

37 *Preta* (Skt.): 'dead man, corpse; ghost, spirit' (Macdonell 1929: 188). In Nepali and Newar the word *agati*—'Misfortune, damnation, failure to achieve salvation' (Turner 1931: 4)—refers to a *preta* which is unable to escape its liminal condition.

38 Stevenson (1920: 180-1).

as soon as possible to the land of the living to be with its mortal remains. It is for this reason that the corpse is burnt in the intervening period; this signifies to the *preta* that its place is no longer in this world, but in the kingdom of Yama. These beliefs help to explain the *sī guthi*.[39] The Newar are obsessed by death, and they are obsessed by the dramatic consequences that can arise if the funeral rites are not carried out according to tradition.[40] All Newars I have met, whether peasants, merchants, priests, or painters, display the same mixture of incomprehension and fear with respect to those people who live on the edge of society: ascetics, for example. How, if they are deprived of their caste and of all family support, can these people be cremated or buried when they die? Who will take care of the funeral rites? For the Newar, this is a singularly important question. Death *guthi* are a collective way of responding to it.

39 The expression 'sacrificial community' used by van den Hoek and Shrestha (1992: 65) in this regard is interesting. However, their interpretation of the cremation as a final sacrifice which humans must offer does not seem to me to fit the Newar case, or only partially. Newars consider cremation as a means for the deceased to take his or her leave of human society as much as (if not more than) a self-sacrifice.

40 Death is also a prominent theme of most of the Newar's collective rituals and festivals.

2

The Social Organisation of Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs

Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs (or Dyabhāju) are the domestic priests of high-caste Hindu Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. This means that, principally, they are the priests of the vast cluster of status groups known collectively as Śreṣṭha, the great majority of whom are traders, shopkeepers, or civil servants. In theory, Śreṣṭhas do not call on other Brāhmaṇ castes of the area (Kumāī, Purbiyā, Jhā, Bhaṭṭa) to perform their life-cycle rituals.[1] Most Rājopādhyāyas function both as domestic priest *(purohit)* and as temple priest (Nep. *pujārī*; New. *pūjā yāyeīṃ).*[2] In their latter function they serve temples financed and run by the state such as

---

First published in *Contested Hierarchies. A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,* edited by David Gellner and Declan Quigley, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 186-208. Fieldwork was carried out in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur in April and May 1978, then in 1986 and 1988. I would like to thank Saphalya Amatya, Bimala Karamjit, Krishna Prasad Rimal and Nutandhar Sharma for their help.

1 The exceptions to this rule (Toffin 1984: 289) are evidence of the erosion of traditional caste ties. I have come across no examples of Rājopādhyāyas acting as domestic priests for Parbatiyās, but where there is a mixed marriage, the two *purohits*, Rājopādhyāya and Parbatiyā, can celebrate some of the marriage rituals together.

2 As mentioned in the previous chapter (note 5), the Rājopādhyāya of Lalitpur are also in charge of the *kārtik pyākhā* dance which is performed annually in the month of Kārtik (October-November), bright fortnight, *śukla pakṣa*, in front of the former royal palace of the city. They are the main religious teachers of this dance and they incarnate its main figure, Narasiṃha, the *avatāra* of the god Viṣṇu who kills the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu with his nails. The Brāhmaṇ

Kumbheśvar, Kṛṣṇa Mandir, Taleju, Cāngu Nārāyaṇ, etc, as well as those belonging, in most cases, to lineages, the upkeep of which is in the hands of private individuals. They are especially associated with the state temples dedicated to Viṣṇu.

These Brāhmaṇs constitute an almost wholly endogamous caste of about 1,500 people divided principally between the three ancient capitals of the Valley: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. Unlike Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs (Kumāī or Purbiyā), they are city-dwellers. Kathmandu has the highest concentration—45 households—which derive from an original 17. Lalitpur, which is a very Buddhist city, has 43 households, and Bhaktapur only 31. In all three cities the Rājopādhyāya live near the old palaces of the Malla kings.

To these one has to add a certain number of families who have left their town of origin and moved to one of the smaller Newar settlements in order to carry on the rituals at a local temple: Pharping, Thankot, Chapagaon, Kirtipur, Sankhu, Satungal, Tokha, Icangu, Bode, Dhulikhel, Banepa, Nala, Panauti, etc. These Rājopādhyāyas usually consider their primary attachment to be to their place of origin, and they return there regularly to celebrate the festivals of Dasaī and Tihār. A few of them have also migrated because of economic difficulties or mixed marriages.

Although they have considerable reservations about considering themselves Newar, the Rājopādhyāya are nonetheless very involved in Newar culture and follow its most specific customs such as the consecration rites for old people known as *burā jākwa*. All of them speak Newar at home, at least some of the time; most of them also speak Nepali, especially to their children. Their dietary rules are more flexible than those of Indian Brāhmaṇs: they eat both meat (but only goat, sheep and duck) and fish. Taken as a whole, the Rājopādhyāya are educated people, often authors of books and very sophisticated. They belong to the Mādhyaṃdina school of the White Yajur Veda. Their holy language is Sanskrit but the instructions in their priestly handbooks are usually written in Newar. They are aware of their high moral authority in the eyes of Hindu Newars and keep scrupulously to the purity rules they are obliged

responsible for this task wears a mask of the deity. The family in charge of this religious function belongs to the Wālānimā lineage (*gotra*: Gārgya). The role was handed over to them by King Siddhi Narashima (1620-1661), who is said to have established the Kārtik dance in honour to Viṣṇu. The priest of the Kṛṣṇa Mandir temple of Lalitpur also belongs to this particular family. The ancestor of the clan in question, Hari Vamsa Upadhya, came originally from Varanasi and founded a religious school, *gurukul*, in the city.

to follow in spite of the awkwardness of doing so in the modern world. Even today 75 to 80 per cent of Rājopādhyāya men work either as a domestic or temple priest, and many of them do both. But, as in India, it is the ritual status of Brāhmaṇ which is significant for other castes more than the actual practice of priesthood. Thus, the Rājopādhyāya is important in Newar society because of his birth in the requisite group and not because of any specific personal qualities.

History of the caste

The Rājopādhyāya claim to originate in Kanauj, in the north of India (Uttar Pradesh), a city with a prestigious history from which the Parbatiyā Kumāī Brāhmaṇs also claim to come.[3] According to some of them, the ancestors of the Rājopādhyāya came to the Nepal Valley in the 13th to the 14th centuries with Harisimha (or Nanyadeva), a king of Tirhut chased away from his kingdom by the Muslims. It is said that they were the priests both of the royal goddess Taleju and of the king himself. According to others, they have been in Nepal much longer than that. A myth tells of how two Kanaujiyā or Kānyakubja (Kānyakubja=Kanauj) Brāhmaṇs arrived one day at Paśupatināth in Nepal. The elder was called Alāsa Rāj, the younger Ulāsa Rāj. At that time there was not a single Brāhmaṇ in the Valley. The two priests began to recite Vedic texts; this pleased the king greatly and he asked them to stay on. One of them settled in Kathmandu, the other in Bhaktapur. These two Brāhmaṇs were the ancestors of the Rājopādhyāya. Another version claims that there were four Kanaujiyā Brāhmaṇs who set out: the first three settled in the three cities of the Nepal Valley; the fourth, who is supposed to have been the ancestor of the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs, left for the hills. According to yet another version, the two Brāhmaṇs who came with Harisimha were the Alāsa Rāj and Ulāsa Rāj mentioned above. The Rājopādhyāya are descended from the former, the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs from the latter.[4]

In spite of their mythological aspects, these traditions are perhaps the echo of real historical occurrences. The genealogy of a family of the old

3 On the history of the Rājopādhyāya, see Regmi (1965: i. 679; ii. 438-41, 756), and Witzel (1976). 'Coming from Kanyakubja, i.e. Kanauj, region is a frequent claim among brāhmaṇs in areas distant from the Madhyadesha or the Ganges heartland (...). There was considerable geographical mobility among brāhmaṇs at that time (XI-XIIIth centuries) as it is evident from those that travelled to Kashmir and eventually found employment in the courts of the Deccan, such as Bilhana' (Thapar 2005: 82).

4 See also Rimal (1983: 10-11).

royal priests of Bhaktapur, published by Witzel (1976), contains the name Ulāsa Rāj. According to this document, this Kanaujiyā priest arrived in the Nepal Valley in the middle of the 16th century and died in 1576. He is supposedly the earliest 'Nepali' ancestor of the family. However, these dates have to be treated with caution because other interpretations of the genealogy are possible: the original ancestor could have migrated to Nepal in the 14th century, at roughly the same time as Taleju was brought to Bhaktapur, or at the end of the 15th century during the reign of Raya Malla (1482-1505) (Witzel 1976: 163-75).

In Lalitpur the mythological history of the Rājopādhyāya is linked to the mountain of Maṇicur and the persecutions they are supposed to have suffered, just before the alleged visit of Shankara Acarya to Nepal, at the hands of the Newar Buddhists. According to an oral tradition, of which there are traces in the chronicles,[5] the ancestors of the present Rājopādhyāya of Lalitpur, who were Kanaujiyās, were forcibly converted to Buddhism and had their sacred threads torn off. A few Brāhmaṇs, however, managed to run away to the mountain of Maṇicur, in the north-east of the Valley, just above the present town of Sankhu. The Bānre (i.e., Vajrācāryas and Śākyas) chased them up to the top of the mountain and virtually exterminated them. Only ten families were able to escape the massacre and took refuge in the forest. Several years passed. One day, two holy *swāmīs* stopped in the kingdom of Nepal. They were surprised to find not a single Brāhmaṇ and revealed this fact to the king. 'A kingdom without Brāhmaṇs, without offerings in the *jaggye*,' they told him, 'is inauspicious, ungovernable. We can stay here no longer.' The king was very worried and had the survivors of the massacre of the Brāhmaṇs summoned. Five families agreed to leave their refuge and decided to settle in Lalitpur. When the good will of the king was confirmed in this way, the remaining five families followed suit: two of them chose Bhaktapur, two others Kathmandu, the last one Lalitpur. These ten families, it is claimed, are the founders of the ten clans found today among the Rājopādhyāya.

During the Malla Period, from the 13th to the 18th centuries, the

5 See, in particular, Padmagiri's chronicle published by Hasrat (1970: 38). It is interesting to note that Lalitpur Buddhists have exactly the reverse picture of these events. Their myths refer to the forced conversion and/or slaughter of Newar Buddhists when Shankara Acarya came to Nepal (cf. Hasrat 1970: 38-9, and the chronicle translated by Wright 1972: 118-20). Buddhists link Maṇicur with these persecutions just as Brāhmaṇs associate the same place with their own 'defeat' a few years earlier.

Rājopādhyāya, or rather the Upādhyāya (Upādhya) or Dyabhāju as they were called at that time,[6] were the priests of the Hindu aristocracy of the Nepal Valley, that is, of the Chatharīya, the group which governed the kingdom. The Rājopādhyāya were especially attached to the Mallas, the royal family, whose chaplains *(purohit)* they were. They also fulfilled the functions of priests *(pujārī)* of the goddess Taleju, tutelary divinity of the rulers from at least the 14th century and a crucial figure in the symbolism of Malla power. The priest of Taleju sometimes gave the king a magic formula, *dīkṣā mantra*, which enabled him to summon the goddess and win her favours (Toffin 1986: 87). Together the chaplain and king formed an indissoluble pair.

The *rāj guru*, spiritual preceptor of the king and highest religious authority of the kingdom, also seems to have been a Kanaujiyā Brāhmaṇ. He sometimes combined his office with that of priest to Taleju and played a crucial role in the kingdom. His office was surrounded by an aura of sanctity and the king had to take his advice on numerous subjects (D.R. Regmi 1965: ii. 438). He came immediately after the 'prime minister' *(cautārā)* in the hierarchical order and could on occasion replace him. The *rāj guru* also acted as witness when the king made a pious gift of land and when there was a peace treaty between sovereigns. As in India, the king owed obeisance to all the Brāhmaṇs of his kingdom and supported them with donations of land.

Like many of the immigrants who came to live in the Valley in earlier times, the Upādhyāya or Dyabhāju became progressively more integrated with the local people, who spoke *nepā bhāṣā* (Newar), a language which is deeply Tibeto-Burman. At the same time they always preserved their religious identity and their status as Brāhmaṇs. In the eyes of the Newar, who were largely tribal, these priests represented, in effect, the main link with the learned Hindu tradition, the tradition of Brahmanic orthodoxy, even if they very soon turned in the direction of Tantrism.[7] They were the guardians of the religious texts without which it was impossible to make offerings either to the gods or to ancestors; they were the living incarnation of *dharma*, the Hindu social and cosmic order. They played a crucial role in the process of Hinduisation of the Newar-speaking people of the Kathmandu Valley and their influence was felt

6 In the inscriptions, Rājopādhyāyas were also often called *jujubaje* (New.), an honorific title.

7 On the Tantric tradition of the Rājopādhyāya, cf. Toffin (1989).

everywhere, even in the most remote villages.

It seems that the Rājopādhyāya did not exist as a caste or even a subcaste in the Malla Period. There were at that time several types of Brāhmaṇ in the Nepal Valley. Some came from Bengal, some from the south of India, and still others from Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tirhut. They either came as refugees to Nepal at different periods as a result of Muslim conquests in India or were invited by one Malla king or the other for a specific purpose (e.g., to serve as temple priests or to perform a given ritual). However, historical documents, which admittedly are few and far between, make not a single mention of any caste organisation, or of any division into different groups of Brāhmaṇs. Nor does it seem that the present-day Rājopādhyāya are all descended from a single ancestor as legends claim. Rather it appears that the first arrivals, no more than several families, continued to receive reinforcements until quite a late date (at least until the 16th or 17th century). The present Rājopādhyāya caste is thus more likely to have been the product of the amalgamation of successive waves of migrants than of the fission and separation of the descendants of a single ancestor.

Whatever the truth may be on the question of origin, the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in the second half of the 18th century played a crucial role in the formation of the Rājopādhyāya caste. Confrontation with an exterior power and the Rājopādhyāya's consequent loss of status were decisive for the development of their identity. Prithvi Narayan brought with him Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs who replaced the Rājopādhyāya as the supreme religious authority and took over from them most of the lucrative positions. The regime of the Shahs clearly favoured the Brāhmaṇs of the hills to the detriment of those of the Kathmandu Valley, and even, so the Rājopādhyāya claim, confiscated their lands.[8]

These historical events soon resulted in a *de facto* and *de jure* fall in the status of the Rājopādhyāya. The Law of the Country (Law Code), introduced in 1854 by Jang Bahadur, introduced a sharp division between them and the hill Brāhmaṇs, and it reserved the title Upādhyāya for the latter. The former, called Devbhāju, were placed at a very low level in the Nepalese caste hierarchy, far behind the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs,

8 These fields were probably *birta* or *guṭhi* land. On the extension of state control over land in the Kathmandu Valley after Prithvi Narayan's conquest, see Regmi (1978*b*: 696-7; 1971: 46-9).

and even below the Ṭhakurī and the Tāgādhārī Chetrī, as if they were Brāhmaṇs of inferior rank (Höfer 1979: 152). This unusually low position for those who had been the *purohit* and *guru* of the Hindu royal family did, however, pose problems for the law-maker. Certain passages of the Code contradict the official hierarchy and presume that the Devbhāju are superior to the Ṭhakurī and the Chetrīs. Thus, they are exempt from capital punishment, just like Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs (ibid. 152). We should also note in passing that the Rājopādhyāya are not included among Newar castes properly speaking, who have a section of the Code reserved especially for them; Rājopādhyāyas are discussed among the Parbatiyā castes, as are the Newar Untouchables.

The short reign of Pratap Singh Shah (1775-8) was an exception to this pattern, a brief moment of respite for the Rājopādhyāya, a clearing in a cloud-filled sky. This king, the oldest son of Prithvi Narayan, was very well disposed towards the Newar because, it is said, he had a Newar concubine, the grand-daughter of one of the leaders *(kaji)* of Kirtipur, with whom he was head over heels in love. He was also addicted to Tantrism and received an initiation *(dīkṣā)* from a Devbhāju of Lalitpur called Kirtijwalananda Upādhyāya (Rimal 1983: 10). He is supposed to have been the first Shah king to drink alcohol. Pratap Singh was very open towards the Devbhāju and granted them certain rights. Indeed some claim that it was he who granted these Brāhmaṇs the title 'Rājopādhyāya', a name which seems not to have been used, or if it had, very rarely, in the preceding period.

•

Status, power, and identity

Although the Law of 1854 is no longer in force, divisions based on old cleavages continue. Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs still consider the Rājopādhyāya as inferior and refuse to marry them. They accuse them of being the priests of Newar castes whose domestic ceremonies are similar to those of *śūdra*s; they also accuse them of carrying out heterodox Tantric rites which require them, among other things, to drink alcohol and eat certain types of meat. For their part, the Rājopādhyāya refuse to recognise the superior status of the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs: they consider themselves to be either superior or equal to them. They consider themselves, often justly, to be more cultured than the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs and regard them with some contempt as village Brāhmaṇs who have to live as peasants. The two groups do not accept cooked rice or any cooked food from each other. This conflict-ridden situation is perpetuated by numerous finan-

cial law cases and political intrigues. The Rājopādhyāya complain that they have been removed from the kingdom's important religious positions and are now always placed in a lowly status during, or even excluded from, big national festivals.

As a result of this, there are virtually no marriages between the two groups. During my research I found only a few isolated cases of mixed unions: four in Lalitpur, two in Bhaktapur, to restrict myself to those two settlements. In every case it was a Rājopādhyāya man married to a Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇ woman, and never the other way around, since the former are loath to give their daughters in marriage to the latter. These marriages do not lead to any fall in status on the part of the man, even if he eats food cooked by his wife. However the status of the children is more problematic: the elders of the community are in general opposed to the idea of accepting the sons of such hybrid unions as full members of the caste. Nonetheless, wealth or a prestigious social position can help in overcoming such difficulties.

The Rājopādhyāya do not marry with either the Jhā or the Bhaṭṭa, two other important Brāhmaṇ groups in the Kathmandu Valley. These priests, of Indian origin, have lived in the Valley for a long time, but have never been so deeply Newarised as the Rājopādhyāya, even though most of them speak Newar fluently. They are basically temple priests and, with the rare exception of those among them who have low-status Śreṣṭhas as their patrons, do not function as domestic priests. The Jhā (also called Miśra or Terhautyā), come originally from Tirhut, and are temple priests for numerous Hindu shrines, both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite; they also hold public readings, in Newar, of religious texts in villages, an activity that renders them slightly lower in status because it is done for money. As for the Bhaṭṭa, they come originally from the south of India; they are temple priests in Śaivite temples, including the Paśupati temple on the river Bagmati, and several renouncer monasteries *(maṭh)*. The Rājopādhyāya consider both of these Brāhmaṇ castes to be inferior to themselves. Any mixed union is considered illegitimate (New. *mathyā patī*) and results in immediate expulsion from the caste.[9]

In such a small community, marriage sometimes poses thorny problems. Around 1850 the Rājopādhyāya tried, for the first time, to estab-

9 In the Law of the Country of 1854, the Jhā and the Bhaṭṭa were classed among 'Indian Brahmans', just below the Devbhāju; cf. Höfer (1979: 151-2). Contrary to what Rosser affirms (1966: 85), these two Brahman castes do not belong in the Newar system.

lish matrimonial relations in India with the Kanyākubja Brāhmaṇs. Contacts were established but the Indian Brāhmaṇs demanded extremely ancient genealogies demonstrating absolutely pure descent. The Rājopādhyāya were unable to produce such documents. And then, they said (once their advances had been rejected), the customs of the two groups were, in any case, different. 'In India, for example, Brāhmaṇs eat in the open air, in the fields. Among us that is strictly forbidden.' *'Jāt milay jū, vyavahāra milay ma jū'* (In terms of caste we have the same status, but not where customs are concerned). A second attempt was made in 1952. A committee was set up, the Kanyākubja Bibāha Sāmānya Samiti, at the instigation of Rameshananda of Bangemurha, Kathmandu. An emissary, Mahadya Baje, of Bhaktapur, was sent to Kanauj, but once again the demand was rejected by the Indian Brāhmaṇs. Furthermore, the matter ended badly for Mahadya Baje. The wily intermediary returned from his long journey with two young Indian Brāhmaṇ girls, whom he married to members of his family. But no one knew where these girls had come from or who exactly they were. Mahadya Baje was suspected of having bought them, and he was expelled from the caste, along with all of his family. This unconventional man had already, some time earlier, taught a Tantric *mantra* to a Rañjitkār (Chipā), a low caste to whom, in principle, the *dīkṣā* initiation is not permitted; for this reason Mahadya Baje was already on the fringes of his community.[10]

As has already been mentioned, the Rājopādhyāya do not consider themselves to be altogether like the Newar. They prefer to place themselves outside this ethnic group. The Rājopādhyāya can only really claim the full status of Brāhmaṇs by distinguishing themselves from the Newar. Like all self-respecting Brāhmaṇs, they embody in effect the transcendental values of religious life. As such, they are opposed to the local values represented by the Chathariyā, the Śreṣṭhas, and other Newar castes. The fact that they belong to the Brāhmaṇ caste prevents them from being too closely attached to any tribal group.

On the part of many Rājopādhyāyas, one senses a willingness to merge into the wider Nepali culture. Not satisfied with differentiating themselves from the Newar, the Rājopādhyāya today are purposely taking on the clan names (Nep. *thar)* of Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs. In Kathmandu, for example, members of the Makhāchẽ clan call themselves Subedi because,

10 On Tantric initiation *(dīkṣā)* among the Newar, cf. Toffin (1984: 556-8) and Gellner (1992: 266-81).

like the Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇ Subedi, they belong to the Bhāradvaja *gotra*. The same is true of the Rājopādhyāya of the Hwāgaḥchē clan who nowadays add 'Rimāl' to their name, because, like the Rimāls, they are members of the Kausik *gotra*. To justify these pretensions, recourse is often taken to the origin myth, according to which Parbatiyā and Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs are descended from the same parents.

The Nepali language is advancing at the expense of Newar. I often heard Rājopādhyāya priests use the word 'Chetrī' (the name of the Parbatiyā caste claiming *kṣatriya* status) to refer to their Śreṣṭha *jajmān*. In spite of all the cultural elements which separate them, many Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs today feel themselves closer to Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs than to Newars. Brāhmaṇ status seems to take precedence over ethnic identity. It is surely significant in this respect that few Rājopādhyāyas feel themselves concerned by the cultural and ethnic movements which have agitated the Newar community in recent years.

Kin groups

The Rājopādhyāya are divided into clans, called *kawā* (or *kawaḥ)*, *kul, khala* (from the Hindi *khalak)*, or even *chē* (literally 'house' in Newar). The genealogical depth of these patrilineal units varies from seven to fifteen generations, but only a few people manage to go so far back, and then always with the help of written charts *(vaṃśāvalī)* preserved by the families in question. The average genealogical memory does not go back more than four or five generations in the main line, and three or four generations in collateral lines. All the same, these clans are larger than Newar kin groups, which are characterised by their shallowness and rapid fission.

The clan is strictly exogamous. Any sexual relationship between patrilineal relatives is considered incestuous. The rule can, however, be manipulated, as proved by the following anecdote, collected in Lalitpur. One day a young man fell in love with a girl belonging to his own clan. The elders held a meeting and decided that the girl's maternal uncle (who had no daughter of his own) should adopt her. The adoption was carried out and the couple was then able to get married. In marriage, as in many other domains, social kinship counts for more than biological kinship.

The clans are named after the locality (Nep. *ṭol*; New. *twāḥ*, *nani*, or *cuke)* where the house of the oldest known common ancestor is found. In Kathmandu the Rājopādhyāya community was originally divided into

two clans: Hwāgaḥchē (Hwāgaḥ=Indra Chok) and Makhāchē, two areas of the old city to the north-east of the Hanumān Ḍhokā palace. In Lalitpur the Rājopādhyāya are divided into six clans: Balimhā, Sulimhā, Swaṭha, Torālipi, Mahādyaḥnani (=Wālā), and Wanglasimā (the last named does not exist today). In Bhaktapur, they are divided into two: Tsutsachē and Ipachē, both to the south of the royal palace. There are thus ten clans in total, a number which, as we have seen, fits the origin myths of the caste.

There is quite a strong correspondence between kinship and residence since sons have a tendency to build their house next to that of their parents. However, lack of space, internal quarrels, and the new opportunities which have opened up in recent years because of the expansion of the real estate market have led kin groups to be scattered throughout the town. Previously, definitive migrations from one city to another were rare and seem to have occurred mainly because of adoptions. Nowadays, the rise of salaried employment has led a certain number of Rājopādhyāyas to settle in the capital. In case of migration, whether to the countryside or to the capital, the family remains attached to the clan of origin, even though links tend to become weaker over time.

Members of a clan consider themselves to belong to the same patrilineal group and to be united by a common agnatic link. The precise expression for this type of kinship is *āgā phuki*, agnates who worship the same clan divinity *āgādyaḥ* (on which, see below). As long as they do not belong to the same lineage, these *āgā phuki* have only a very small number of mutual obligations. They are not polluted by each other's death; their womenfolk must merely pay a visit to the family of the deceased during the ten days following the cremation, taking with them cakes (Nep. *roṭi)* and sweets (Nep. *miṭhāi)*. This visit of condolence is known as *bicāḥ wanegu* in Newar. One should note that in certain cases it is possible to tell straight away from a man's name which clan he belongs to. Thus, in Lalitpur, all the male members of the Wālā clan have a compound name of which one part is *dhar* ('endowed with' or 'bearing' in Sanskrit). This is a considerable source of clan identity and solidarity.

The seniormost elder, *thakāli*, of the kin group enjoys undisputed moral authority and plays an important ceremonial role. He is invited, along with his wife, to all life-cycle rituals celebrated within the clan. In principle, it is always he who is chosen as spiritual preceptor, *guru*, to give the Vedic *gāyatrī* formula on the occasion of the Brāhmanic initiation ceremony *(vratabandha*; Skt. *upanayana)* and to give the neophyte

the sacred thread *(janai)*, the distinctive mark of the 'twice-born'. He also plays a central role when the Tantric initiation *(dīkṣā*; New. *dekhā)* is held for the young people of the clan. This ceremony, organised on a collective basis, is a purely clan ritual, reserved exclusively for members of the kin group, both male and female. Participation, however, is entirely optional.

It sometimes happens that the principle of seniority, fundamental to Newar society, comes into conflict with the hierarchical principles inherent in kin relations. A severe quarrel broke out in this way twenty years ago in Kathmandu. Rameshananda, a prominent personality of the Rājopādhyāya community of the city, disputed the authority of the senior *thakāli* of the time, arguing that the latter was in fact his 'nephew', a relative who is required by the general rule to show respect to his uncle, notwithstanding the fact that in this particular case he belonged to a senior branch of the lineage. Rameshananda therefore refused to bow down (New. *bhāgi yāyegu)* in front of his 'elder' as clan custom required and instead claimed for himself the title *thakāli*. The affair was brought to various law courts whose officials prudently refused to pronounce judgement. The quarrel caused a schism within the community which even today is still not healed.

Clans with a large number of members are divided into lineages of greater or lesser depth, called *kacā* (or *kul* in Bhaktapur). In Lalitpur, the Balimhā clan is divided into three lineages called Paṭuko (22 households), Gābahā (two households), and Balimhā (narrowly defined) (eight households), names which also derive from residential localities. In Bhaktapur, the Tsutsachẽ and Ipachẽ clans are divided into four and two lineages respectively, making a total of six for the whole town; they lack more precise local names. The members of kin groups of this sort call themselves *tāpā phuki*, that is 'distant kin', or *bā phuki*, 'split kin'. It is the impurity incurred at the moment of a death which best signifies the solidarity of the group: a death within the lineage pollutes all its members. However, this pollution lasts only a single day; it ends as soon as the corpse leaves the family's house or *cok* (interior courtyard, characteristic of the urban Newar dwelling). It is called *yana byāṃ* in Newar, from *byāḥ*, which Manandhar (1986: 183) translates as: 'Food given to a household in which a death has occurred, uncooked food with all that is necessary for preparing a meal, including the firewood and spices.' In the six days which follow the cremation the women must come to offer their condolences to the family of the dead person, bringing uncooked rice,

vegetables *(tarkāri)*, flour, salt, and milk. This visit, called *byāḥ wanegu*, indicates a closer kin relation to the dead person than the visit required of women of the same clan as described above.

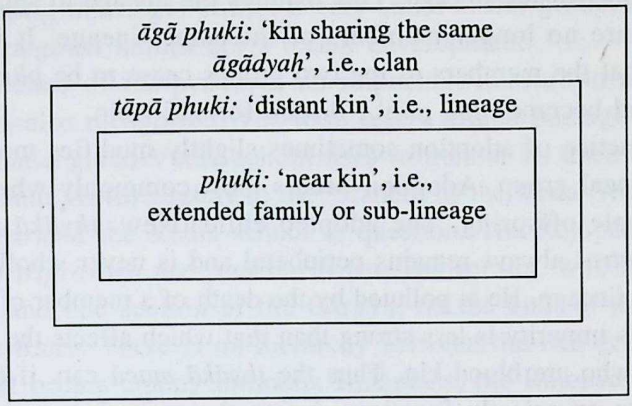


Fig. 2. **The three categories of agnatic kin with the three corresponding levels of patrilineal affiliation among Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs**

The division of the Bhaktapur Rājopādhyāya into six lineages *(kul)* is reminiscent of the division in Lalitpur into six clans. It is very likely that the attraction of the number six, with its religious significance, has played a role here and that reality has had to be forced somewhat to fit this pre-established frame. Furthermore, in Lalitpur, practitioners of Tantra make a connection between the six Rājopādhyāya clans and the six 'circles', *cakra*, which are found in the human body according to yogic thought. One should note that these six vital centres are situated in a vertical axis from the sacred plexus to the cranial aperture; the cosmic energy *kuṇḍalinī*, carried within each individual, ascends this axis. This concern for cosmic totalisation goes even further since some informants make a correspondence between the six clans, the six *cakras*, and the urban space of Lalitpur.

Lineages are in their turn divided into still smaller groups: sub-lineages or groups of families. Such groups are known by the name of the area, *twāḥ*, or of the courtyard, *cok*, in which they are centred. Their members are considered to be *phuki*, agnatic kin. If one of them dies, all the patrilineal kin are polluted for ten or eleven days. These sub-lineages play an important role in everyday life, especially at the level of mutual aid. The segmentation of a lineage into sub-lineages usually occurs in the seventh generation and seems to be accelerated by the occurrence of marriage relations between a member of the lineage (or clan, as the case

may be) and someone who is of the lineage from the mother's side. For example, a marriage may be arranged between a young man of the lineage and a girl who is the grand-daughter (daughter's daughter) of another member of the lineage. This requires the lineage to split so that the two men are no longer members of the same lineage. It is from that moment that the members of the two groups cease to be *phuki*, near kin, and instead become *tāpā phuki*, distant (or split) kin.

The practice of adoption sometimes slightly modifies membership of the patrilineal group. Adoption occurs most commonly when there is a lack of male offspring. The adopted child (New. *thyākā macā*; Nep. *dharma putra)* always remains peripheral and is never wholly integrated within the lineage. He is polluted by the death of a member of his adopted kin but this impurity is less strong than that which affects the members of a lineage who are blood kin. Thus the *thyākā macā* can, if the occasion arises, take on priestly functions during the mourning period, whereas this is strictly forbidden for anyone else. Moreover, he has the right to receive a 'sacrificial fee', *dakṣiṇā*, from other members of his lineage or sub-lineage, whereas this is completely forbidden between ordinary agnatic kin. Adoptions from one city to another are commonplace. The adopted child has a slightly lesser status for the whole of his life.

The Rājopādhyāya are, in addition, divided into *gotra*, an institution of direct Brahmanical inspiration. There are three *gotra* among them: Kausik, Gārgya, and Bhāradvaja. The Hwāgāḥchē clan of Kathmandu belongs to the first, most of the Rājopādhyāya of Lalitpur belong to the second, and to the third belong all the Rājopādhyāya of Bhaktapur, a small group of Lalitpur, and the Makhāchē clan of Kathmandu. Originally, it is said, there was one *gotra* in each city: Kausik in Kathmandu, Gārgya in Lalitpur, and Bhāradvaja in Bhaktapur. These *gotra*, which are groups with very vague boundaries and little effective existence, are believed to have been founded by the ancient sages *(ṛṣi muni)* of Hindu mythology, who were sons of Brahmā. *Gotra* are large pan-Nepali and pan-Indian entities which group together completely different castes. However, within any given caste, there is a certain relation between *gotra* and kin groups. An exception to this rule is provided by the Balimhā clan of Rājopādhyāyas in Lalitpur: it consists, for reasons which remains obscure (possibly because of an adoption), of two lineages each belonging to a different *gotra*.

Even though connected to a prestigious Sanskritic tradition, the *gotra* play only a minor role in social organisation. Contrary to what is nor-

mally the case among Brāhmaṇs, intra-*gotra* marriages are permitted, particularly within the Gārgya and the Bhāradvaja. It is probable that this fact, abnormal from a strict orthodox point of view, is due to the difficulties in arranging marriages within a very small social group. According to some, intra-*gotra* unions are a recent development.

The existence of the *pravara*, an important institution among the Brāhmaṇs, is also recognised. The term refers to that passage in the sacred texts that a given Vedic school uses to honour its ancestors. Thus the division into *pravara* refers to the 'branch' of the Veda *(vedko śākhā)* and to the *guru* of the Vedic school in question. The Rājopādhyāya are divided into *tripravara* and *pañcapravara*. The former, who include the Bhāradvaja and one section of the Gārgya, tie the knot of their sacred thread three times. There is no hierarchy between the two groups. Contrary to what occurs among orthodox Brāhmaṇs, the Rājopādhyāya may marry members of the same *pravara*. However, the union is forbidden if both the *gotra* and the *pravara* of the two families are identical.

Clan divinities and the locality

Each clan has its own Āgamic or Tantric deity, known as *āgādyaḥ*. This category of deity is specific to the Newar, and in particular to the high Hindu and Buddhist castes.[11] This divinity is normally housed in a separate building, called *āgā chẽ* (literally 'the house of the *āgādyaḥ*'), which is reserved for this purpose alone; usually it is situated in the part of the town from which the clan originates. The statue of the god is kept upstairs on the first floor. As we have seen, the *āgādyaḥ* plays a central role in clan life and in the identity of the lineage. Marriage is forbidden between two families who share the same āgamic deity. In Bhaktapur, for example, the two agnatic groups that make up the Rājopādhyāya community of the city could not inter-marry until recently, because their members worshipped the same *āgādyaḥ*. It was only in 1974 that one of the two groups, the Ipachẽ, built a second separate temple, in Swāmalla, and installed their own deity there, leaving to the Tsutsachẽ Rājopādhyāya the upkeep and the cult of the ancestral temple in Khaisimācok. Since this split, marriages between the two clans have been permitted.

The *āgādyaḥ* is the divinity of all the members of the kin group, but

11 On these *āgādyaḥ* divinities, see Toffin (1984: 558-61) for Hindu castes; Lewis (1984: 123ff) and Gellner (1992: 282-92) for Buddhist castes.

only those who have taken their Tantric initiation, *dīkṣā*, can worship him. Only they are permitted to enter the god's sanctuary and, in principle, are forbidden to reveal the name of the *āgādyaḥ* to the uninitiated. This division is the source of a hierarchy within the clan since it reproduces the opposition between 'seniors' and 'juniors'. The head of the clan, the seniormost member *(thakāli)*, is responsible for the cult of the *āgādyaḥ*. All initiated members *(dekhā du pīṃ)* of the kin group take turns to make the daily offerings *(nitya pūjā)* wherever this is done. The cult of the deity requires blood sacrifices at regular intervals, of goats of a single colour *(nikur* or *nikhāra)*, as *puchā pūjā*, literally, 'offering the thread *(janai)* to the god', which takes place once a year; *dhawāchā pūjā*, offering the god *dhawā* flowers in springtime (Caitra) or in the rainy season (Śrāvaṇ or Bhādra); *thā pūjā*, a rite that is related to the six *cakra* in the human body and which is performed on fixed dates different for each god or temple; *caḥray pūjā*, rite of the fourteenth day of the month, in particular that of the dark fortnight, a very important date in the cult of āgamic deities. These rituals are secret and are not attended by large gatherings.

Every segmentation of the clan is accompanied by a corresponding division of the āgamic deity. However, quarrels within the kin group can also result in divisions of the *āgādyaḥ*; these are irregular from the point of view of the clan structure. Thus, three families of Hwāgāḥchē in Kathmandu no longer worship the āgamic deity of their group because of a conflict over precedence that has already been mentioned above; the cult itself has not yet been divided but all the signs indicate that it soon will be. Likewise, in Lalitpur, one lineage of the Balimhā clan, the Paṭuko, decided several years ago to take the step of worshipping the common *āgādyaḥ* separately from the other clan members. It should be noted that adopted children and their descendants lose all rights over their original āgamic deity and so, even if they return after two or three generations to their natal town, they can never be reintegrated into the clan of their ancestors.

What of the *digudyaḥ* deities (Nep. *kuldevatā)* who play such a crucial role in establishing the identity of lineages among all the Hindus of Nepal? Here, it is necessary to treat each city separately. In Kathmandu, the two Rājopādhyāya clans each have their own *digudyaḥ*: the members of the Hwāgāḥchē clan worship Mahālakṣmī in Icangu, and those of Makhāchē worship Dhum Vārāhī in Bisālnagar. In Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, there is only one *digudyaḥ* for all the Rājopādhyāya of the

city. In Lalitpur, it is Pūrṇacaṇḍī, a form of the goddess Siddhilakṣmī, whose temple is at Puñcalī, near Gābāhāḥ.[12] Even though the temple is today within the boundaries of the city, it is considered to be a *pīṭha* (New. *pīgā)*, a sanctuary which, as is well known, is usually found on the outskirts of the settlement.[13] In Bhaktapur, the *digudyaḥ* of the Rājopādhyāya is a divinity with a secret name who used to previously be sited at the entrance to the city, near the Sallaghari wood; today it is sited on the inside of the old royal palace, in the temple of Do Māju, that is to say, Taleju. Like all attempts to move a holy site, this transfer required a specific ritual called *dyaḥ saray yāyegu* (New.). During this ritual the priest uses a *mantra* to incorporate the god within his own body while he is being moved.[14]

The cult of these divinities *(dewālī* or *degu pūjā)* is organised differently by different groups. In Lalitpur, Pūrṇacaṇḍā is worshipped once a year, on the second day of the dark fortnight of the month of Āśvin (September-October), by the heads of the Rājopādhyāya clans of the city. Each of them must bring a rice cake, called *bhujā* in Newar, and offer it to the goddess. In Kathmandu, the members of the Hwāgaḥ clan hold a small joint celebration on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Caitra (March-April) in Icangu, behind the temple of Nārāyaṇ. In Bhaktapur, the Rājopādhyāya of the Ipachē clan meet in spring at the time of the Bisket Jātrā to have a meal together, after one of their members has worshipped the *digudyaḥ*. In general, the cult of these deities is not, among the Rājopādhyāya, the occasion for large numbers to come together and for the whole clan to feast together, as is the case with Newars when they worship their clan and their deities.[15] Generally, Rājopādhyāya *digudyaḥ* are only worshipped on the occasion of male initiation ceremonies *(vratabandha)* and weddings. Furthermore, their *digudyaḥ* deities are represented by statues and have temples, whereas the *digudyaḥ* deities of Newars are worshipped in the form of simple

12 All these deities belong to Nārāyaṇ. Once more the close relationship between Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs and Vaiṣṇavism is stressed.

13 Toffin (1984: 464). Some informants also list Pūrṇacaṇḍī among the ten Daśamahāvidyā sanctuaries of the city. Pūrṇacaṇḍī has a Rājopādhyāya temple priest performing regular rituals throughout the year. This is extremely puzzling since, in theory, Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs are considered to be too high in status to serve as *pūjārī* in a *pīṭha* type of temple.

14 More strictly, the Newar word for this ritual is *dyaḥ sālāḥ tayegu*. Here the expression used by the Rājopādhyāya derives from the Nepali *sarnu*, 'to shift'.

15 For a description of the cult of the *digudyaḥ*, cf. Vergati (1979) and Toffin (1984: 488-95). See also in this book Chapter 8.

aniconic stones established in the open air outside the settlement.

The opposition between the Rājopādhyāya clan deities and those of the Newar can be pushed further still. Among high-caste Newars, the cult of the *āgādyaḥ* and that of the *digudyaḥ* are connected, often organically, because of their shared basis in patrilineal kinship and common ancestors. Among the Rājopādhyāya, there is a dissociation between the two: it is the *āgādyaḥ* which is identified with the agnatic group and which in reality functions as the *kuldevatā*, clan or lineage deity; the *digudyaḥ* defines the totality of the Rājopādhyāya of a city and not a kin group (except in Kathmandu). The *digudyaḥ* of the Rājopādhyāya is more like a chosen deity, *iṣṭadevatā*, whom one chooses freely and under whose protection one places oneself. In general, the Rājopādhyāya *digudyaḥ* do not have an exclusive relation with a single kin group, nor even with Brāhmaṇs; Pūrṇacaṇḍī and Dhum Vārāhī are worshipped by many other castes and social groups and not just by Rājopādhyāyas.

The rules of marriage and kinship

Where marriage between related persons is concerned, the rule is as follows: it is proper to marry after the seventh generation in the paternal line and the fifth generation on the side of the mother. This rule, called that of the 'twelve' (the total number of prohibited generations on both sides) can be reduced to nine (five in the paternal line, four on the side of the mother) in case of need, when the availability of marriage partners proves to be too restricted. This second rule reduces considerably the number of forbidden marriages in the agnatic line and would often contradict the rule of clan exogamy; it is doubtful whether the rule of clan exogamy can ever be overruled in this way. As for alliances on the side of the mother, one should note that the minimum degree of relationship permitted between the families of the bride and groom is no greater than among the majority of the Newar peasant caste (Toffin 1984: 110).

As with all Brāhmaṇ castes, widow remarriage is strictly forbidden. If it occurs, the couple is immediately excluded from the caste. The descendants of such unions are called Lākhe Barmhū. They can continue to carry on priestly functions for the Śreṣṭha of the city, but only as a secondary priest (Atithi Barmhū),[16] never as the principal officiating priest. In other words, it is forbidden for them to be a domestic priest *(purohit)*.

16 On this category of priests, cf. Toffin (1979*b*: 251). Barmhū (or Brahmū, Barahmū) is the Newar name for Brāhmaṇ (Nep. Bāhun).

In Bhaktapur, the two Lākhe Barmhū families in the city continue to recite religious texts, *purān*, to the Newar population during the rainy season.

It is also forbidden for divorcees, whether male or female, to remarry. In strict Hindu orthodoxy, the matrimonial union is sacred and therefore indissoluble. A divorced woman, like a widow, is considered an impure being, inauspicious and low in status. If she marries again she will be excommunicated by her caste. I heard of only a single case of this kind.

Rājopādhyāyas used to marry pre-pubertal girls, in the manner of Indian Brāhmaṇs. In this way, the marriage took place between two pure beings and the dangerous period during which the young post-pubertal girl was not yet married was avoided. Consequently, Rājopādhyāyas did not observe the specifically Newar rite of *ihi* (from Skt. *vivāha*, Prakrit: *vihi)* during which the pre-pubertal girl is married symbolically to the *bel* fruit, a symbol of Nārāyāṇa (or Śiva, according to some). Things have changed today. Since 1951, child marriage has been forbidden in Nepal. Rājopādhyāya males today marry post-pubertal girls. Some of them now celebrate *ihi* for their young girls, so that, they say, the girl is already married, albeit only symbolically, before the arrival of her first menstruation (New. and Nep. *raja)*. But this rite, where it is done, is carried out in a simplified manner in a few hours, and on an individual basis; it is never performed collectively as with the Newar. Furthermore, the Rājopādhyāya do not perform the *kanyādān*, the 'gift of a virgin', as part of this ceremony as Newars do. The *kanyādān* is the central part of a wedding for the Rājopādhyāya, and it is performed during the real wedding, in the house of the bride.

Thus kinship and caste determine the choice of a marriage partner. However, economic factors also play a role since a marriage tie requires a considerable volume of prestations, nearly all made by the family of the bride to the family of the groom. Marriage is, in effect, considered to be a gift, *dān*, the gift which a man makes of his daughter to his son-in-law; hence the crucial role of *kanyādān*, which is not found among the Newar. This is the reason why the Rājopādhyāya of Bhaktapur, whose standard of living is relatively low, rarely marry with those of Kathmandu, who have gained considerably from the development the capital has experienced in recent years. For their part, the young women of Kathmandu show little enthusiasm to be married in Bhaktapur, which, although certainly an orthodox city, has not much benefitted from the

modernisation efforts of the country and appears fossilised in its past.

In contrast to what happens among the Newar peasant caste, among the Rājopādhyāya, wife-takers occupy a position of clear superiority in relation to wife-givers. The son-in-law (New. *jilājā*), occupies a central and prestigious place in socio-religious life. He is considered to be an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. At a meal he is served first and he receives by right the best food in abundant quantity. The *lākhā* cake he is offered during the wedding ceremony is considered to represent the discus *(cakra)* of Viṣṇu. The son-in-law is pampered and honoured on all major ritual occasions; his in-laws bow down to him and wash his feet during the marriage ceremony. This hierarchical model is also found in the following generation, in the relationship between an uncle and his sister's son. The latter is always treated like a king in the house of his maternal uncle; he can do whatever he pleases there. The presents which his uncle has to make to him during the different life-cycle rituals through which he passes express and reinforce still further this hierarchical relation between givers and takers of women.

There is a homology between this asymmetry and the function of priesthood. If one's *purohit* is sick or is unavailable for some reason, the sacrificer (patron of a ritual or sacrifice) chooses either his son-in-law or his sister's son *(bhinā macā)* to carry out life-cycle rituals in his house. As a general rule, the sacrificer is to the priest what the father-in-law is to his son-in-law and what (in part) an uncle is to his sister's son. The *purohit* (who is never chosen from among patrilineal kin) can never be chosen from the family of the maternal uncle, who are considered lower in status. As a corollary, the maternal uncle may never accept a sacrificial fee *(dakṣiṇā)* from his uterine nephew. As elsewhere in India, the function of priesthood is here doubly determined, both by relations of caste and by those of kinship.

Funeral association and social control

The Rājopādhyāya call their funeral association *sanāḥ guthi* in Newar and *āpat uddhār goṣṭhi* in Sanskrit. These associations, which are unique to Newar civilisation, are charged with carrying out the cremation of their members and helping the family of the dead person to pass through this difficult period. The members *(guthiyār)* of the association are obliged to take part in the funeral procession of a dead member; they must come wearing a *dhoti*, in bare feet, with their upper body covered only with a thin woollen wrap, and with their sacred thread placed on their left shoul-

der.[17] They carry the dead person to the pyre and take care that the body is reduced completely to ashes. Only Rājopādhyāyas may touch the corpse. Members of service castes are invited only to build the pyre, play music, and shave the relatives of the dead person.

These associations are organised on the basis of each city of the Valley: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. In Kathmandu, there are two, in Bhaktapur, there is one, and in Lalitpur, as will be explained below, there are none. The associations contain only Brāhmaṇs, and that, too, only males. Membership is optional and totally independent of kin links: one may join the association of one's choice, without worrying about one's clan allegiance. It is sufficient to live in the relevant settlement. It is therefore quite natural for a family which comes from Bhaktapur but has migrated to Kathmandu to change its *sanāḥ guthi*. This is done by paying an entrance fee or taking on certain obligations in the coming year.

The *guthiyār* are supposed to come together and hold a feast once a year. In Kathmandu, one of the two associations of the city holds its feast on the third day of the dark fortnight of Pauṣ (December-January), and the other on the eighth day of the same half of the same month. The members go first to worship the goddess Indrāyaṇī (=Lhuti Ajimā), to the north of the capital by the bank of the Vishnumati, and offer her a goat. Then they hold the feast in the house of one of the members. All the members of the association must take part in these offerings and reunions. Anyone who is absent must pay a fine (New. *bā tayegu)* of 20 to 25 rupees. The division of tasks for the following year is decided during the meeting and everything recorded in a register.

The association runs according to a very precise system of rotation. The *guthiyār* must take turns to carry the corpse and to organise the annual feast. For example, in Bhaktapur, where it is the custom for the corpse to be carried to the pyre by six men, turns change at each death. The system is less rigid than it may appear: it is possible to swap one's place with someone else if prevented from participating by some reason or the other. The cost of holding the feast is borne by the organiser. In some cases, the association has assets. Donations are deposited in a bank and a treasurer makes sure that the capital bears interest.

Funeral associations frequently split up because of internal quarrels. Until 1910 there had been only one *sanāḥ guthi* in Kathmandu; in that

17 It is doubtful whether *guthi* members who are not relatives of the dead person comply with this rule of dress.

year it split into two. Today the Rājopādhyāya of the city are still divided between these two associations, one with twenty numbers, the other with nine. In Lalitpur, quarrels have been so violent that funeral associations have broken down entirely. In spite of all efforts to revive them, cremations at present are carried out only by the close relatives of the dead person. In Bhaktapur, on the other hand, the Rājopādhyāya have been able to resist such centrifugal pressures. The only *sanāḥ guthi* of the city depends on another very important social institution of the Rājopādhyāya caste: the *upākarma guthi*. In practice, the *upākarma guthi* carries out the functions of the *sanāḥ guthi*.

This second type of association belongs to the category of Newar *deś guthi*, local *guthi* whose purpose is to oversee social control and which fulfil the role of caste council at the local level. There are three Rājopādhyāya associations of this sort in the Valley, one for each of the three old royal cities. Only the Rājopādhyāya are members. In contrast to the funeral associations, it is obligatory to belong to the *upākarma guthi*: all adult males of the local segment of the caste must belong to it and take part in its activities.

The members of the *upākarma guthi* meet once a year on Janai Pūrṇimā (New. Guni Punhī), full moon of the month of Śrāvaṇ (July-August). As is well known, it is on that day, the most holy day of all, that high castes change their sacred thread *(janai)*. Even though this festival is celebrated by all the twice-born *(dvija)*, and thus by different castes, it is considered in Hindu tradition to be particularly the festival of Brāhmaṇs (Gonda 1965: 326-7). In each of the three cities of the Valley the Rājopādhyāya meet on this date at a specific site on the banks of a nearby river. The Rājopādhyāya of Lalitpur meet at Saṅkhamūl, the holy site to the north of the city where the Bagmati and Manohara rivers meet; those of Kathmandu meet at Swabhā Bhagavatī, a local temple to the north-west of the city on the right bank of the Vishnumati; those of Bhaktapur meet at the Khware (or Khwāre), a sacred complex along the banks of the Hanumante, on the south side of the city.

The Rājopādhyāya men begin by bathing *(snāna)* in the river, wearing only a white *dhoti*, in order to rid themselves of all sins they may have committed over the course of the past year. Then the heads of the clan *(thakāli)* carry out various rituals, including a *rudri* (hymns to Śiva), an offering to the seven sages *(ṛṣi tarpaṇa)*, an offering of balls of fruit *(phal piṇḍa)* to the ancestors, to the sages, and the king. During the course of these complex rites the sacred thread is changed. The seniors

of the clan take care to recite sacred formulae over the sacred thread which is to be worn. All these ceremonies take place by the banks of a river, where there is running water. However, if someone is too ill to move, he may change his thread at home.

Several meetings and feasts take place during and after Janai Pūrṇimā. Some of them are only for the leaders and dignitaries of the caste, others are for all members of the *guthi*. Until very recently, the expenses were covered by the revenue from land owned by the *guthi*. This land has today been registered by the tenants in their own names; it no longer provides any revenue to the associations. The *upākarma guthi* have to be financed by a system of subscriptions and a wide appeal for financial contributions. The responsibility for the functioning of the *guthi* falls on a different person (New. *pāḥlā)* each year. All male Brāhmaṇs who have been initiated and wear the sacred thread must take their turn, beginning from the oldest and going down to the youngest. Since, however, the number of Rājopādhyāyas in the same town is sometimes larger than 200, it can happen that one passes one's whole life without such a turn arriving. In Bhaktapur, the system of rotation is organised in such a way that one's turn as *pāḥlā* can only come between the ages of 38 and 42, a time of life when a man is considered to be in good physical health but at the same time to have sufficient resources for the task.

The responsibilities of the *pāḥlā* are numerous and resented as an extremely heavy burden, since it is expected that he should finance the deficit, which always exists, from his own personal income. In Lalitpur, for example, three days before the full moon of Śrāvaṇ the turn-holder has to invite all the young Rājopādhyāya who have gone through their *vratabandha* initiation that year, as well as all the influential members of the caste (in particular the heads of the six clans), and the priests of the Taleju and Agni temples. To each he offers a lemon and four baskets of flowers, a custom known as *swāṃta wanegu* in Newar. Several days after the full moon of Śrāvaṇ, the turn-holder of the Lalitpur *upākarma guthi* has to organise a procession called the Narasiṃha Yātrā. He himself has to take the role of the god Narasiṃha, a mask of the deity on his face and a crown *(mukuṭa)* on his head. Once the procession ends, he has to invite all the Rājopādhyāya of the city to eat in his house. In Kathmandu, this meal, called *lisā bhway*, takes place four days after the full moon.[18]

18 For a more detailed description of the rituals of the *upākarma guthi* in Lalitpur, see Toffin (1996*a*).

For the young initiates the festival of Janai Pūrṇimā marks an essential step in the process of socialisation. During the *vratabandha* initiation (New. *burhã tayegu)*, the young man receives his sacred thread and into his ear his *guru* whispers the *gāyatrī*, a Vedic formula taken from the Rig Veda. Thus, he passes from the state of a *śūdra*, in which he was since his birth, to that of the twice-born, *dvija*. However, it is only several months later, on the day of Janai Pūrṇimā, that the young man is definitively integrated into his caste. On this date, in effect, the initiate is admitted to the *upākarma guthi*: his name is registered as a member (New. *nāṃ chwayegu* or *darta yāyegu)*. If he contracts a forbidden marriage, or one which his relatives consider to be so, the young man will find himself barred from the association. Thenceforth, he is never again considered wholly a Brāhmaṇ and will not be able to take part in the religious activities of his caste. In short, the *upākarma guthi* functions as a caste council and plays a determining role in social control. The clan leaders, who are at the head of the organisation in each city, are the guarantors of the traditional order.

The name of this association, *upākarma*, derives from the Sanskrit name of the ceremony which took place at the beginning of Vedic study in ancient India. Certain texts stipulate that this rite, also called *upākaraṇa* or *vedārambha*, should be carried out on the full moon of Śrāvaṇ (Kane 1941: ii[2].808), the very day of the festival of Brāhmaṇs. One is supposed to celebrate it just after the *upanayana*. The young boy used to leave his family and go to live with his spiritual preceptor or *guru*. The period of religious instruction lasted twelve years, during which the young student *(brahmacārin)* devoted himself to studying the Veda and to carrying out certain ascetic practices, the most important being total chastity. Today, religious instruction among the Rājopādhyāya of Nepal begins with the *vratabandha* and usually lasts only for several months, at most several years. The student does not live with his *guru* during this period. He learns the Veda, in the morning before going to school or in the evening, from his father or his paternal uncle; he lives at home while doing so. It all seems as if the strictly religious and educational aspects have disappeared and left in their place a ritual of caste incorporation, celebrated with great emphasis. The old Sanskrit vocabulary persists—*brahmacārin*, *upākarma*—but it is the question of caste status that is important today.

It used to be the custom for all the heads of the Rājopādhyāya clans of the Valley to meet from time to time. This assembly, presided over by

the oldest member of the caste, is called the *tine sāhāra sabhā* (assembly of the three cities). It deliberates on questions of status and attempts to arbitrate in disputes within the *guthi*. It seems that it has not met for more than 30 years.

Recent changes

Like all the other inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley the Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs have experienced unprecedented changes since 1951. The opening of the country to the outside which followed the fall of the Ranas, the development of service industries and of tourism, the modernisation of the whole framework of life—all these have transformed the traditional economic and cultural landscape. The rise of Kathmandu, which is more and more taking on the allure of a modern city, has already led many Rājopādhyāyas to leave Lalitpur and Bhaktapur and settle in the capital. Considerable divergences have appeared. Nowadays, the Rājopādhyāya of Kathmandu are open to foreign influences and to modernity; they take much greater advantage of the changes in the economy than the Brāhmaṇs of the other two cities. Some of them even work in the tourist trade. These disparities may undermine the spirit of caste solidarity, just as movements of populations are weakening the traditional clan structures that used to be based entirely on the locality. As elsewhere, the power of the seniors *(thakāli)* is being contested by their juniors: they find it difficult to accept the guidance of old men they regard as old-fashioned.

The Brahmanic rules of life appear more and more incompatible with the new rhythm and constraints of life in a modern city. Traditionally, most Rājopādhyāyas had a stable on the ground floor of their house where they kept a cow since its products are indispensable for the performance of the daily rituals. Today, this custom has almost wholly disappeared because of the absence of pasture and because the general conditions of urban life no longer permit it. In general, rituals tend today to be considerably shortened for reasons of material convenience: there is simply no time for long-drawn-out rites! The *upanayana* initiation, the key moment in the life of the young Brāhmaṇ, used to last three months at the beginning of this century. Today it is completed in a single day. Finally, the number of those taking Tantric initiation is growing smaller, since young people hesitate to embark on a religious path requiring them to fulfil innumerable rules which often appear outmoded in the context of modern life. This reluctance threatens the very identity of the caste,

which has always been closely connected with Tantrism.

Nevertheless, the Rājopādhyāya have so far maintained their religious identity intact. They are still renowned throughout Nepal for their strict orthodoxy and their great learning in certain areas. Completely absent from the agricultural field, barely engaged in commerce, they still embody the highest spiritual values. In spite of their inclination towards autonomy, which derives from an ancient Brahmanic tradition and which prevents them from limiting themselves within a strictly ethnic framework, other Nepalis still identify them with the Newar, while the latter, too, regard the Rājopādhyāya as *their* Brāhmaṇs.

3

The Farmers in the City

The social and territorial organisation of the Maharjan (Jyāpu) of Kathmandu

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the results of fieldwork carried out in 1991 and 1992 among the Newar farmers (Maharjan or Jyāpu) of the old Kathmandu city. Surprisingly enough, this local caste group has received very little attention from the large number of anthropologists working in Nepal. The hill ethnic groups and the Tibetan minorities living in remote areas, far from the capital, are nowadays much better known than some of the inhabitants of Kathmandu. However, as I will attempt to demonstrate, the farmer population is of primary importance for an understanding of the growth and the present structure of Kathmandu. Their forms of organisation also show very clearly the pivotal role of territorial bonds among the Newar. I shall restrict my analysis here to a general survey of the complex social and territorial organisation of these farmers together with some historical background. In a sense, this study refers back to fieldwork I carried out during the 1970s in the Newar villages of Pyangaon and Theco (see Toffin 1984: 66-108).[1] The differences and the basic

First published in *Anthropos*, 1994, no. 89, pp. 433-59. It has been revised and corrected slightly for the purpose of this current publication. At the time of the research, the population of Kathmandu city numbered 414,264 (1991 census) (1971 census, 150,000, within smaller boundaries). The area covered by the current city is much wider than its older part.

1 See also in this book, Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

similarities between the two types of farmers, urban and rural, have always been present in my mind during my research, and I shall touch upon this subject at the end of this chapter.

According to local chronicles, the city of Kathmandu (or Kantipur) was established by King Gunakamadeva during the 10th century CE. The site, located at the confluence of the Vishnumati and Bagmati rivers, is supposed to have been assigned to this king through the prophecy of the goddess Mahālakṣmī, who appeared to him in a dream (see, e.g., Hasrat 1970: 46; Lévi 1905/*i*: 52f). This 'foundation' was undoubtedly nothing more than the unification of earlier settlements. Licchavi remains—chiefly inscriptions, stone sculptures, and architectural fragments—attest that several localities, *grāma*, had existed in the present built-up area of Kathmandu since the 5-6th centuries CE. Among them, we can mention Kolīgrāma, Dakṣiṇakolīgrāma and Vaidyagrāma (Slusser 1982/1: 87-91; cf. also D. Vajracharya 1987: 357-362). Contrary to the legend reported by the chronicles, Kathmandu thus probably originated from the coalescence of several villages or settlements. However that may be, the city became the capital of an independent city-kingdom during the 15th century. The *Padmagiri* chronicle states that Ratna Malla (1482-1520) was ordered by the goddess Harasiddhi to become the *rāja* of that place (Hasrat 1970: 46). This sovereign threw in jail (or killed) the twelve small Vaiśya kings who ruled the city before him and founded a kingdom (Regmi 1966/*ii*: 33; Petech 1982: 192). Kathmandu attained its final shape and structure, which are preserved in their basic pattern up to the present day, during the reign of Pratap Malla (1641-1674). By that time, the old city already had its current urban design, with narrow lanes and congested courtyards. It was densely concentrated, totally enclosed within walls, and surrounded by a hinterland of farmlands and villages (Toffin 2002). By the end of the 18th century, i.e., just after the conquest of the three Malla kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah—a king from a small mountain chiefdom in central Nepal—the population of the city was not more than 30,000.[2]

From Ratna Malla until Jaya Prakash Malla (1735-1768), Kathmandu was ruled by a branch of the Malla royal dynasty with the court and administration modeled on India. These kings frequently fought their

2 According to the estimation by Gutschow (1979*b*: 249). However, we do not have a precise figure for the population of Kathmandu during the Malla Period.

two nearby cousin city-kingdoms, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, whose sovereigns belonged to the same Malla dynasty. As within these two other cities, the bulk of the population was formed by the Newar—an indigenous ethnic group, speaking a Tibeto-Burman language and following cultural patterns heavily influenced by classical Indic sources. The kings professed Hinduism and ruled according to Śāstric Hindu prescriptions. Brāhmaṇs, coming originally from Kanauj, served as royal priests and as officiants for the Newar Hindu aristocracy (Chatharīya). The population of Kathmandu also included a large number of followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism. More than one hundred monasteries (Skt. *vihāra*, New. *bāhāḥ)* were scattered throughout the old city, with eighteen main ones playing an important role in the spatial fabric of the town. However, this Buddhist community underwent a gradual process of Hinduisation, mainly because of its isolation. Concepts and practices taken from Śaiva Tantrism were adopted, monkhood was abandoned, and the Buddhist cultural elite became hereditary priests conforming very closely to Brahmanical models. Last but not least, Newar Buddhists embraced the caste system. The Newar population of the city, whether Buddhist or Hindu, was consequently divided among a number of castes. Hinduism pervaded the whole society and assigned every section a definite position. Even the urban space was laid out according to caste ranking. The status of the groups declined in proportion to their distance from the centre of town. The lowest segments of the hierarchy lived on the edges of the city, and were thus designated as being in opposition to the pure inhabitants living inside the urban settlement.

Commerce played a vital part in the growth of the city. Like Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, Kathmandu was located along the ancient trading road leading from North India to Tibet. According to Gutschow (1979*b*: 248), the spine of the old city itself derived from the old trade route that cut across the Valley from Kirtipur to Sankhu. But agriculture was also an essential component of the local economy and the main source of support for its inhabitants. As was the case with the other Malla capitals, farmers used to live not only in villages outside the urban settlement, but within the city as well. The association of the peasantry with the urban character of the city was clearly a distinctive feature of these Malla capitals. The urban farmers, who have long practised intensive rice cultivation, walking to their surrounding fields to work during the daytime, belong to the theoretically endogamous caste of the Maharjan.

The Maharjan represent 42 per cent of the Newar population of the

Valley (Rosser 1966: 86)[3] and generally call on Buddhist Vajrācārya priests for their own life-cycle rituals.[4] Within the *varṇa* framework used by the Newar, they are usually considered to be Śūdra (but also sometimes Vaiśya). They have their own lifestyle, different from that of craftsmen and traders, and form one of the oldest strata of the Newar ethnic group. They appear more strongly attached to traditional ways than many other Newar castes. Very little is known about this important component of the Malla city during the so-called mediaeval period since historical data deal mainly with kings, Brāhmaṇ priests, and Buddhist monasteries. The purpose of this study is to throw some light on these farmers by using contemporary ethnographic observations.[5] In fact, despite the large-scale urban changes of the last three decades, the old social and territorial organisation of the Maharjan of Kathmandu has been well-preserved throughout the centuries. It is still rooted in a traditional structure dating back at least to the Malla Period (13th-18th centuries), if not earlier. It is my contention that such socio-religious features can help us understand the role of the urban farmers within the Malla city-kingdoms. They may also illuminate some controversial points in the history of Kathmandu city.

The 32 *ṭol* of Kathmandu

The Maharjan farmers of Kathmandu (New. Yeṃ) today constitute a group of about 2,900 households (personal survey, 1991) that marry almost exclusively among themselves. They still rely on agricultural work, though the younger generation has recently taken up other trades, including jobs in the bureaucracy. Some of them farm their own fields but in most of the cases they are tenants for high Hindu or Buddhist Newar castes. In 1972, the Maharjan made up 24 per cent of the total Newar population of the old city (Greenwold 1974: 103). Though such a proportion is less than in Bhaktapur (over 50 per cent) and Lalitpur (38-40 per cent),[6] this group forms the backbone of the old Kathmandu city and has played down to the present a prominent role in the urban religious

3 This figure could be much lower today.

4 However, the Maharjan (Suwāl) of Bhaktapur and Panauti call on Hindu priests for their domestic rituals (cf. Regmi 1965/i; Toffin 1984: 287).

5 Field research was carried out with the assistance of Annick Hollé, geographer, and Krishna Prasad Rimal. I would like to express my gratitude to David Gellner for his comments on an earlier draft. In 1998, I published (in French) another article on this subject in the journal *L'Homme*, no. 156, with additional ethnographical facts and analysis.

6 The figure for Lalitpur is taken from Gellner and Pradhan 1995.

life. They also contribute greatly to the overall social order. Traditionally, the farmers of Kathmandu are always said to be divided among the 32 named quarters, *twāḥ* in Newar, *ṭol* in Nepali. These *twāḥ* cover most of the historic core of the city and seem to be connected with an old ideal division of the town. In any case, they have to be distinguished from the city's present division into 35 wards used for administrative purposes by the central government and the municipality. These modern wards, which spread out over a much greater area than the old Malla city, do not correspond at all to the 32 traditional *twāḥ*.

A standard list of the '32 *twāḥ*' has been published by some Nepali scholars, distributing them among the three parts (upper, middle, lower) of the city (see, e.g., R.K. Vajracharya 1982: 39f). It is more or less correct insofar as the names are concerned, but it wrongly mixes up Maharjan and Prajāpatī (potters) quarters. The potters form (at least at present) a group totally distinct from the farmers.[7] In my survey, I have been able to identify 28 Maharjan *twāḥ*—some of them having split recently—and five separate Prajāpatī *twāḥ* (see table below). In spite of this discrepancy, the old concept of '32 *ṭol*' is nonetheless very much alive among the Maharjan and is still used to designate the whole farmer community of Kathmandu.

The idea of 32 *twāḥ* has rich symbolic signification. In the Indian world, the number '32' summons up a wide spectrum of religious references. The outermost border of the Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala, the square on which rests the Hindu temple and the plan of all architectural forms of the Hindu, for instance, is subdivided into 32 units, each linked with a divinity. Even now, the altar built for the fire-sacrifice by Newar Buddhist and Hindu priests is made up of 32 bricks and 32 kinds of grain are offered in it during ceremonies. This auspicious number is also to be found in the 32 petals of the lotus of Ākāśa, which, in architecture, is the typical basis or support of a building. Similarly, the king is supposed to have 32 auspicious marks *(baṭṭislakṣaṇa)* on his body, and so does the Kumārī living goddess.[8] Undoubtedly, '32' is derived from the original

7 The Prajāpatī of Kathmandu constitute a group of 400 households having their own identity. Their relationships with the Maharjan are problematic. Traditionally, there were few marriages between the two groups. Although matrimonial relations have increased today, the Maharjan still consider the Prajāpatī an inferior group. In any case, the potters lie outside the 32 *ṭol* Maharjan pattern of Kathmandu. According to one reliable information, in former times, the farmers could marry with potters making red pots; marriage with potters specialising in black pots was forbidden (cf. also Chapter 5).

8 Among the Newar, '32' is also an auspicious sum of money for the payment of *dakṣiṇā* to

'4' corresponding to the four cardinal directions. It is a multiple of 4, 8, 16 and 64, numbers used both in Hinduism and Buddhism to represent the universe on a reduced scale.

It should be noted that this sacred notion has been used in administrative contexts by different Indianised kingdoms. According to Burmese chronicles, Prome (=Śrīkṣetra), the capital of the ancient kingdom of the Pyu, was built with 32 main gates, each corresponding to one of the empire's provinces or vassal states (Heine-Geldern 1942: 19). Similarly, the 14th-century CE kingdom of Pegu, near present-day Rangoon, had 32 provinces, and the principality of Kengtung, one of the most important among the Shan State, is even today known from the name of the people controlling it: the 32 towns of Khun (Heine-Geldern 1942: 19). Last but not least, according to Chinese sources, in the ninth century CE, the kingdom of Kaling in Java was ruled by 32 high dignitaries (four ministers and 28 local regents) under the direction of the king (Mus 1935: 299). In India itself, a capital such as Pataliputra was administered by a 32-member council (Drekmeier 1958: 169)

The numeral '32' also derives from the Vedic gods since they are said to be 32 in number, residing on the summit of Meru Mountain with Indra on top of them. In the Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala mentioned above, the 32 gods of the outer border of the sacred square have their centre in Brahmā. Along with this deity, their number becomes 33—a figure of cosmic totality. Thus, the notion of 32 *twāḥ* elevates Kathmandu out of the realm of the ordinary world. The capital becomes a microcosm of the universe and a paradigm of order for the kingdom. Such a conflation tends to lay emphasis on a religious conception of kingship. In this system of thought, indeed, the sovereign becomes the equivalent of Indra, encompassing the administrative units of his capital just as the king of the heavens exerts his control over 32 lesser gods. As far as the Kathmandu Valley is concerned, the division of the city into 32 units is specific to Kathmandu. Bhaktapur and Lalitpur are said traditionally to be composed of 24 quarters, a number which significantly is also based on a rich web of symbolism: it is a multiple of 8 and it refers to the 24 lunar divisions of the year (Gutschow 1980: 60).[9]

priests or to other religious specialists. Moreover, on some ritual occasions, 32 kinds of food are offered to *kanyā* little girls (New. *kanyā nakegu*).

9 As far as Lalitpur is concerned, it seems that this notion of 24 *ṭols* (corresponding to the legend of the foundation of the city by King Bir Dev) is quite theoretical. Actually, Lalitpur comprises 45 Jyāpu quarters, *twāḥ* (cf. Chapter 12).

So, when did this division originate in Kathmandu city? Unfortunately, historical data is quite unable to answer this question. Some of the names of the quarters are mentioned in mediaeval inscriptions but we do not actually know when the notion of '32 *ṭol*' was introduced in the urban settlement. The first trace of it dates only from the second half of the 19th century. It is found in Oldfield's *Sketches from Nepal* (1880). The author, a surgeon attached to the British Residency in Kathmandu, reports that the city is said to be divided into 32 small squares, or *ṭol* (1880: 103). What is more, he writes, 'The number of gateways corresponds exactly with the number of squares (*ṭol*) within the city,—each gateway being associated with a particular square, and placed under the municipal control of the same local authorities, who were as much responsible for the repair and defence of the gateway as they were for the general management of the square' (idem: 95f). It is true that Bhaktapur's National Art Gallery contains a map of Kathmandu from the turn of the 20th century showing 33 gates instead of 32, all around the city (Gutschow 1982: 110f.). But, as suggested above, '33' can be read as 32 (Vedic gods) + 1 (Indra, at their head). Yet, the names of the gates appearing on this map, each referring to one quarter in the city, do not correspond, or do so only very imperfectly, with the present list of the Maharjan quarters.

Presumably, the existence of the '32 *ṭol*' predates the 19th century. But this is a matter of conjecture. At present, it is enough to state that this division must be posterior to the unification of the city by Ratna Malla in the 15th century. Even if it is not very old, we will see that this notion is derived from archaic elements that point back to the very origins of the city.

Let me now turn to the present ethnographic facts. The farmers today use the word *twāḥ* in two interrelated meanings: a) a Maharjan social grouping, characterised both by a compulsory musical association called *dhimay guthi,* and by exogamy; and b) an old territorial unit, the residential quarter which is defined by a number of sacred places and ritual practices; within this quarter, the Maharjan form only a part of the population and are mixed with other Newar and Nepali castes. There is some ambiguity in the use of *twāḥ* in its two meanings, which is to be expected since the first one also denotes a spatial unit. But, as will be shown, the social grouping *twāḥ* remains active even when the corresponding territory has vanished. For the sake of clarity, I will use the word 'quarter' with a capital 'Q' when the first meaning is intended and with a small 'q'

in the second case. It must be noted that non-Maharjan castes always use the word *twāḥ* in the second sense. That is why a Maharjan informant could report to us straightforwardly that Śreṣṭhas (the Hindu Newar traders caste) have no *twāḥ*.

The musical association *dhimay guthi* and Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the god of music

The 28 actually existing Quarters are the major segments of the Maharjan community of Kathmandu. They constitute corporate exogamous groups, having their own identity, owning a common territory, and uniting in several ritual activities. The solidarity within the group is expressed by a common name built up from the name of its corresponding quarter and the suffix *mi*, lit. 'man', e.g., Watūmi, Wāghaḥmi, etc. Most of the relationships within the farmers of the capital rest on these Quarters. Their size varies considerably: the largest (Musum Bāhāḥ) is made up of 300 households, the smallest (Kusubiyālāchi) of only 25 households. The members are exclusively Maharjan.

Each of these segments forms a social unit of the *guthi* (from Skt. *goṣṭhī*) type. In Newar, this term designates a whole variety of voluntary or compulsory associations connected with the performance of certain tasks or services which often have a religious goal or motive as their basis and which are fundamental to the working of traditional Newar society (on the *guthi* system, cf. Toffin 1984, and, here, Chapter 9). In the present case, all the male members of the Quarter, *twāḥ pīṃ*, adults or considered as such, must belong to this association. Membership is hereditary and follows the agnatic line. A person will never have the opportunity to change his *twāḥ* during his lifetime, and he cannot be a member of two Quarters simultaneously. The interesting point is that this closed association, called *twāḥ guthi, dhimay guthi, or nāsaḥ pūjā guthi,* is based on a cylindrical drum known in colloquial Newar as *dhimay* (classical Newar: *dhemāsa).*[10] In Kathmandu, such drums are peculiar to the Maharjan and maintain the identity of the local segments of the farmers' caste.[11]

The *dhimay* is shaped from a section of a thick, hollowed-out tree trunk. It has two smooth heads to which no tuning paste is applied. The right head is struck with a cane stick which is rolled into a spiral at one

10 *A Dictionary of Classical Newari*, p. 248.

11 There are, however, two exceptions. Some Prajāpatī (potters) play the *dhimay* drum, and the Mānandhar (oil-pressers) of Maru *ṭol* participate in the *dhimay* musical association of this quarter on account of their association with the god Hanumān in their oil-press *(lāykū-sāḥ).*

end; the left is struck with the bare hand. The diameter of the head of this instrument varies in size from 27 to 42 cm for a body length of 50 cm (Wiehler-Schneider and Wiehler 1980: 92). The heads are fastened to the body with leather thongs that are laced diagonally across one another in an X-pattern. This instrument is played in pairs, almost exclusively while walking. It is always combined with the small cymbals *bhusyāḥ*. In the upper and central parts of the city, it is also accompanied by a metal disc, *kēpuī*,[12] struck with a wooden hammer, and in the lower part by a long (80 to 100 cm) slender trumpet called *pwāgā,* which needs the additional support of a bamboo stick when played.

In the upper and central parts of Kathmandu, one or several men precede the *dhimay* players carrying long bamboo poles decorated with colourful flags and two yak tails. These poles, called *dhunyā* or *dhunyā munyā,* are swung and turned (New. *ikegu*) in time to the rhythm of the music of the ensemble that follows. They are associated with the monkey-god Hanumān and are considered to delight the different deities of the universe, especially Buddha. They are brandished only by the Maharjan and do not exist in the other Newar towns of the Valley. According to tradition, there are 17 (or 18) *dhunyā* for all of Kathmandu, but each Quarter of the upper part of the city possesses at least five to ten poles.

The *dhimay* drum is supposed to be one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newar. Contrary to other membranophones, the *dhimay* is apparently purely indigenous and was not brought from India. The Maharjan music teachers assert that the *dhimay* was made 'during the time of the gods' and that the Kirāṭa—one of the first mythological dynasties of the Kathmandu Valley—already played it to drive away the tigers *(dhū khyā bājā)* which, at that time, lived in large numbers in the country. It is also assumed by the Maharjan that the melody of all the Newar musical instruments derives ultimately from the *dhimay bājā*, i.e., the music of *dhimay*. According to some authors, this drum dates back to Licchavi times (5th-8th centuries; see Grandin 1989: 68, quoting some Newar scholars). For them, the *dhimay* and *dhunyā* pole are remnants of ancient Newar martial traditions 'when the Jyāpu, whose caste alone plays these instruments, were taken into military service together with the Nāy (butchers)'.[13] 'It was war music, used in battle; the thundering

12 The word is transliterated *kaypuiṃcā* by Wiehler-Schneider and Wiehler (1980: 122).

13 Wiehler-Schneider and Wiehler 1980: 92. It is still believed today that the Māhāṃ (or Mā), a subgroup among the Maharjan, were employed in the army during the late Malla Period.

drum and the crashing cymbals, heard from a distance, would suggest hundreds of people and thus served to frighten the enemy' (Grandin 1989: 68). Although none of these authors gives firm historical data, there may be some basis to such a tradition. The flags hung from the *dhunyā* pole are for instance called *vijayā dhwaja,* 'the flags of victory', and explicitly symbolise the triumph of the king over his enemies. In addition, *dhimay* was used during the Malla Period in the staging of dramas, together with other Newar drums, such as *koṃcākhīṃ* and *khīṃ,* and *bhusyāḥ* cymbals (Malla 1982: 72).

Before dealing with the musical activities of this association, it is necessary to introduce Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the Newar god of music and dance. This deity, who most probably is pre-Hindu and pre-Buddhist, and who belongs undoubtedly to the tribal heritage of the Newar, is closely linked to the *dhimay guthi.* He is the main symbolic pillar of the Maharjan Quarter and is worshipped before every musical session. Nāsaḥdyaḥ is essentially a formless god, invisible like music.[14] He is represented by simple holes, mostly of triangular shape, in the wall of a shrine or of a private house. These holes may be single or, more often, in sets of three. Each Maharjan Quarter possesses a shrine dedicated to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. This sanctuary, which is the ritual focus of the *twāḥ* group, is always located in a place difficult to access: a small, dark courtyard or a corner. It can be oriented towards different directions. Nāsaḥdyaḥ is nowadays identified with Nṛteśvara (Nṛtyanātha or Naṭarāja), the dancing Śiva, but very few shrine images of him in this form exist in Kathmandu.[15]

The members (New. *guthiyār)* of the association gather regularly to worship Nāsaḥdyaḥ and to demonstrate their unity. The meetings generally take place twice a year: on the ninth day of the Dasaĩ festival (New. Mvaḥni) and during winter, either in Māgh (January-February) or in Phālgun (February-March), on a Thursday or a Sunday—the two days associated with the god of music. On both occasions, an animal (buffalo, goat or chicken) is sacrificed to Nāsaḥdyaḥ and blood is offered to him *(nasāḥ pūjā).* The buffalo horns are often hung from the shrine to please the deity and to commemorate the event. The ritual does not require the

14 Cf. Ellingson 1990: 222. I would like to thank Mireille Hellfer to have sent me a copy of this paper.

15 Generally, the central hole is considered to be Nṛteśvara. The two contiguous holes are identified with the bull Nandi on the right side and the dwarf Bhṛngi (locally pronounced Bhṛndi) on the left. Most of the local shrines of Nāsaḥdyaḥ also contain a small statue of Hanumān, the monkey-god, which is worshipped by the musicians during every *nāsaḥ pūjā.*

assistance of Buddhist priests: it is conducted by the elders of the group. All the members of the Quarter must attend the feast following the sacrifice, even if they have moved their residence to another quarter or to a newer part of the city. They can be fined if they are not present. The expenses of the feast (which include rice, meat, vegetable curries and homemade brewed beer) are financed by fixed contributions.

The *dhimay* drums, *bhusyāḥ* cymbals, and sometimes metal discs, *pwāgā* trumpets, and *dhunyā* poles are kept within a special house called *ākhāḥ chẽ* (New. 'A house where lessons on music and dance are given'; Manandhar 1986: 11) located in the precinct of the *twāḥ*. This music house belongs to a man, the *kaji*,[16] who is in charge of the musical instruments as well as the annual feasts of the association. This person also keeps the group records. This function is handed down from father to son. The *kaji* enjoys great prestige in the association and is exempted from paying contributions.

The drums (between four and ten) are hung from the wall of the largest room of the house, near a small altar dedicated to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. The biggest *(tagwaḥ dhimay)*, which are the most valued, come first, the smallest *(cigwaḥ dhimay)*, the last. They are worshipped daily and receive blood every time a sacrifice is offered to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. The *dhimay* drums are indeed cult objects: they are said to be embodiments of the god of music.[17] They are even thought to be one of the lineage deities, *kul*, of the Quarter. The *ākhāḥ chẽ* also serves as the venue for the *guthi's* feast. If the members of the association are too numerous to fit all together within the house, they will take their ceremonial meal outside, in a nearby courtyard. It must be noted that the Nāsaḥdyaḥ of the music house is worshipped every morning and evening by the *kaji*: the offering *(pūjā)* includes rice, red powder, and burning of oil-lamps.

The *dhimay* drums occupy a prominent position in most religious processions. They are taken out from the *ākhāḥ chẽ* and played on the streets of Kathmandu (and even beyond) several times a year. During the annual sacrifice to the local Nāsaḥdyaḥ, and domestic ceremonies such as *ihi* mock-marriage of young girls or old-age consecration *(jākwa)*, they

16 *Kaji* (not to be confused with *kāji*, the name of an official during the Rana Period): 'an administration, a manager of a social group or of a singing group' (Manandhar 1986: 22).

17 In fact, all the musical instruments of the Newar are viewed as embodiments of Nāsaḥdyaḥ. Ellingson (1990: 267) gives interesting illustrations in this regard. In some cases, Nāsaḥdyaḥ is believed to share the drum with other deities such as Gaṇeśa, Bhairava, Nandi, Kumāra, and Bhṛngi.

are played only in the *twāḥ* territorial area. But for important urban rituals such as Pāhāṁ Caḥray (March-April), Seto Matsyendranāth Jātrā (April), Gūṃ (or Guni) Punhī (full moon of Śrāvaṇ, July-August), Pacalī Bhairava Jātrā (September-October), Sighaḥ Punhī (full moon of Kārtik, October-November), they visit other parts of the old town, accompanying processions of deities. During the Indra Jātrā festival (August–September), the groups of *dhimay* players even have to circumambulate the whole historic centre of Kathmandu. In addition, the government invites these musicians on official occasions such as the marriage of the crown prince, a coronation, or the visit of a foreign president or prime minister. It must be said, however, that in some Quarters (e.g., Musum Bāhāḥ), the *mū dhimay*, i.e., the oldest and most revered drum of the music house (always a big *tagwaḥ dhimay*), is not allowed to cross the boundaries of the neighbourhood; it may only proceed towards the local Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine and then has to come back directly to the *ākhāḥ chẽ*.

The learning of music and the ritual of initiation into the *twāḥ* group

Dhimay drum apprenticeship plays a vital role in the life of the Maharjan Quarter. It occurs every twelve years and concerns all the young farmer boys of the group from the ages of nine or ten to 22 or 23. It is preceded by a collective initiation, called *waḥlāḥ cwanegu*,[18] during which the young boys spend two days and a night in a shrine located, with one exception, beyond the old boundaries of Kathmandu. Depending on the Quarter they are attached to, the initiates go to Bhadrakālī, Pacalī Bhairava, Indrāyaṇī, Swayambhū, Maitī Devī, or Kāṭheśimbhū (=Sighaḥ). On the eve of the ceremony, they receive flowers, fruits, and rice (New. *swāṃ cukegu*). Then, after a night spent around the shrine, relatives offer them a mixture of paddy and rice, and presents of cloth. A procession leading to the *twāḥ* concludes the ritual. The ceremony is repeated for three years. In the third year (New. *waḥlāḥ dhunkeku*), a Vājrācārya Buddhist priest conducts a fire sacrifice *homa* in the deity temple and places a red and yellow *ṭikā* mark on the forehead of all the young boys. After this ritual, the maternal uncle offers his newly initiated nephew a special home-made cotton cloth called *pau gā*. Then a feast (New. *waḥlāḥ bhway)*, in which a member of every Maharjan household in the Quarter must participate, is held. The *waḥlāḥ cwanegu* is organised on the basis of the

18 The meaning of *waḥlāḥ* is unknown to me. In the context of the *guthi* system, *wāla* refers to a group or individual whose turn will come after the present one.

Quarter and is held at fixed dates of the religious calendar. In Bhadrakālī's shrine, the initiation takes place a day before Ghoḍe Jātrā (March-April), in Pacalī Bhairava's, it occurs during Dasaĩ (September-October), in Swayambhū's and in Sighaḥ's, on the Kati Punhī day (October-November), in Maitī Devī's, the day of Lakṣmī Pūjā (October-November), and in Indrāyaṇī's, on Bālā Caḥray (November-December).

The tuition session (New. *dhimay senigu)* can then start. It lasts for a period of about three months, covering the greater part of the rainy season. It begins immediately after the *waḥlāḥ cwanegu,* on Gathāmugaḥ, i.e., the fourteenth day of the dark half of Śrāvaṇ (July-August), and ends on the first day of the bright half of Āśvin (October-November), just before the great annual festival of Dasaĩ. During the first part of the instruction, the young boys gather every evening in the *ākhāḥ chẽ.* The teachers *(guru)* must be members of the musical association of the *twāḥ.* If, for some practical reason, a *guru* is needed from another Quarter, the concerned teacher has to first obtain permission from the heads of the music group. This can be refused, for some *twāḥ* consider their *dhimay* drum to be a sort of *āgã,* a hidden Tantric deity, whose secrecy must not be compromised by disclosure outside the bounds of the association. Learning is by rote and makes use of drum syllables, i.e., each type of stroke has a proper name which has to be memorised. The drum syllables are chanted in the appropriate rhythm by the teacher and copied by the pupil. Then the teacher plays the composition, and the pupil tries to follow (cf. also Grandin 1989: 71). It is said that the beat of the largest *dhimay* drum *(tagwaḥ or mū dhimay)* is different in each and every quarter association and is kept a secret. During the second half of the session, the boys join together not only in the evening for *dhimay* apprenticeship, but also in the morning, in front of the *ākhāḥ chẽ,* to learn how to wield the *dhunyā* pole and to be trained in some acrobatic postures (of which there are twelve). No outsiders are allowed at the teaching sessions in order to keep the students' mind focused on the lessons. The tuition being compulsory, all the men belonging to the Maharjan *twāḥ* know, at least roughly, how to play the *dhimay* drum and to work the *dhunyā* pole. A farmer will be introduced into the *dhimay guthi* of his father only after the completion of the session. This admission is of the utmost importance, for membership in the musical association is regarded as the ultimate criterion for claiming membership in the Maharjan Quarter group.

The acrobatic and musical apprenticeship goes along with a number

of religious ceremonies and offerings to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. The sound of the *dhimay, dhimay bājā*, is thought to be derived from the mouth of the god of music himself. That is why its music is not allowed to be written down, assert the *gurus*. In fact, from the religious point of view, the teacher's efficacy is limited: it is Nāsaḥdyaḥ who ultimately inspires the acrobats and musicians. The artists derive their ability and their talent directly from him.[19] The preliminary rite, called *kislī taygu* (New.), is performed either on a Thursday or a Sunday. Its main purpose is to transfer (New. *dyaḥ sālegu)* the divine energy of Nāsaḥdyaḥ from his main shrine in the Quarter to the small altar located in the practice room of the *ākhāḥ chẽ*. To this end, the music teachers offer to Nāsaḥdyaḥ a small clay cup of uncooked rice with one betel nut and a coin on top of it. They touch the holes representing the god with this cup (New. *kislī* or *kisalī*) and bring it back to the *ākhāḥ chẽ*. The students, for their part, must bow down (New. *bhāgiyāygu)* in front of Nāsaḥdyaḥ and offer him a chicken (some groups stipulate that it be a two-kilo chicken).

Twenty days after this preliminary ritual, the teachers perform a *chemā pūjā* in front of Nāsaḥdyaḥ's shrine. It is a pacification ceremony which establishes an adequate relationship between the worshipper and the divinity. Twenty more days pass and the teachers conduct another rite called *bā pūjā* in homage to the god of music. This ceremony, which takes place in the middle of the apprenticeship period, marks the beginning of the acrobatic and *dhunyā* training. The course is completed by a final ritual called *dhimay pidanegu* (or *piranegu)*,[20] during which the students spend a whole night in the *ākhāḥ chẽ*, the local shrine of Nāsaḥdyaḥ, and then sacrifice a goat (or chicken) to the god of music. Interestingly, this animal has to be stolen by the students sometime during the preceding day. It is said that Nāsaḥdyaḥ will favour his larcenous devotees and may strike those who try to bother them. After the sacrifice, the teachers distribute red and yellow *ṭikā* marks to all their students and relatives. It is believed that Nāsaḥdyaḥ manifests himself personally to the students at the time of this ritual, either by possessing them or by sudden flashes in the lamps which are lit around his shrine.

Furthermore, the *pidanegu* ceremony is the occasion for the teachers to apply a black mark, made of soot, mustard oil, and clarified butter, on the foreheads of their students (New. *mwaḥanī phaygu)*. This mark, called

19 In Newar, *nāsaḥ* means charm, skill, delight, inspiration.

20 Compare with the *piranegu* described by Wegner (1986: 14-16).

mwaḥanī sinhaḥ (New.), symbolises the powers of the god of music. It is a very dangerous substance indeed which has to be used cautiously and never given to non-initiates or outsiders, for such persons can go mad. A man wearing the *mwaḥanī sinhaḥ* is believed to be of superior status; he partakes of divinity and will never bow down in front of any other men not bearing this mark, even if they are older than him. He also has to be careful not to be 'crossed' (New. *hācāṃ gāykegu)* on the staircase by somebody above him, for this will entail severe offence and require a rite of purification. It must be noted that the drummers and the *dhunyā* pole-bearers wear the black mark on their foreheads during every important ceremony of the yearly lunar cycle. Without *mwaḥanī sinhaḥ,* no power, *siddhi,* will come: the drummer will not be able to play in rhythm, and the dancers will fall down. On the night after *pidanegu*, one of the *dhimay* teachers goes along the banks of the Vishnumati or the Bagmati river and hides the bamboo pot with the black substance in the sand. Nobody is allowed to see where the pot is buried.

In the following days or weeks, the teachers and their students go in procession to many temples of Kathmandu or its environs, playing the *dhimay.* Until then, the newly initiated members of the Quarter would have played this drum only in the practice room of the music house. Once the *pidanegu pūjā* has been completed, they are sufficiently well-trained to perform in public and to play in the streets of the town. In Musum Bāhāḥ, a quarter belonging to the lower part of Kathmandu, this event (New. *dasa lhāygu)* is marked ceremonially the day after *pidanegu* itself. The musical troupe, led by *pwāgā* trumpets, has to pay a visit to the descendants of the Malla royal family (Thakūjuju) of Bhimsenthān and then proceeds towards the Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine of Hanumān Ḍhokā, the former royal place (Nāsal chok), where offerings are made. On the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Āśvin (September-October), most of the *dhimay guthi* of Kathmandu send their musical ensembles to the shrine of Pacalī Bhairava. Four days later, on the eve of Vijayādaśamī, the groups of musicians visit the three-storeyed temple of the goddess Taleju, the former royal divinity, in the heart of the city. The next day, some *dhimay* associations go to Paśupatināth and Guhyeśvarī. About a month later, at the full moon of Kārtik (October-November), the groups pay a visit to Swayambhū, the most sacred place of Newar Mahāyānism. Some Maharjan from the upper and the central parts of the city also demonstrate their skill with *dhunyā* poles during this period. To this end, they erect a wooden pillar on top of which a plank is affixed. In full tradi-

tional dress, the young farmers take turns to climb onto this structure (New. *khaḥ)* and swing the decorated pole from one hand to the other in acrobatic positions. This exercise, called *māḥ tāḥnegu* (New.),[21] is performed in front of the Pacalī Bhairava temple, in the former royal palace and in Swayambhū.

Lastly, from the full moon day of Mārga (November-December), Yaḥmari Punhī in Newar, the *dhimay* associations which have just completed their tuition sessions would formerly circumambulate the '32 Maharjan *ṭol*' of Kathmandu playing the *dhimay* drum. In each quarter, the teachers and young musicians were welcomed with feasts, especially by their married sisters or daughters, if any. These musical processions, *bwasa wanigu*, spread over a period of four to five days, thus, strengthened the links between the different *twāḥ* of the city. They were given up in the 1970s, owing to the new time constraints imposed by modern life. As all the Quarters did not hold their instructions at the same time, *bwasa wanigu* processions were staged year after year under the direction of different musical groups.

It is clear from these ethnographic observations that music and acrobatics play a most active role in the socialisation of young Maharjan boys. A farmer will be integrated into his basic group, the *twāḥ*, only after completing the *waḥlāḥ cwanegu* initiation and the apprenticeship of the *dhimay*. Once these ceremonies have been performed, he must observe all caste restrictions on pain of losing his own caste status. He has to refrain from eating pork and he must take only pure food from people of castes higher than his. He may not take water from or allow himself to be touched by untouchable castes or menstruating women. Furthermore, if he travels outside the Valley, he will have to purify himself in the Bagmati river and to shave his head (New. *pu cwanegu; pu* means 'frost') when coming back. In other words, he becomes a full member of his caste, ritually and morally responsible for his own actions.

This drum is thus an essential element in promoting solidarity within the Quarter and in maintaining the distinctiveness of the Maharjan community. In the colloquial language, *dhimay* is even used as a synonymous term for the farmer's caste.[22] But there is more: the structure of the

21 *Māḥ tāḥnegu* (short form: *māḥtāḥ*) seems to be derived from Skt. *mahā* and New. *tāḥnegu* 'to join things together'.

22 *Dhimay* (second meaning): 'an ironic term of address for a Jyāpu' (cf. Manandhar 1986: 119).

Maharjan Quarters of Kathmandu mirrors that of the *dhimay guthi* groups. Here, music is obviously an organisational principle of society and residence. It is an integral part of the basic Maharjan network of social ties and of their reproduction. Without *dhimay,* the local Quarter group cannot exist and cannot claim to exist. This drum represents, identifies, and unifies the social group. As a cult object attached to men, it also emphasises the perennity of the musical association; as noted, it is a figure of ancestrality.

Oddly enough, this pattern is confined to Kathmandu. Although music plays a prominent role in all Newar settlements and is closely related to social or religious activities among every Newar caste, it supports the whole social structure only in the present-day capital of Nepal. In Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, the farmers do possess *dhimay* drums, but the associations in charge of these instruments, *dhimay khalaḥ* or *dhimay mākāḥ*, are open to other castes or do not command the territorial division of the city as in Kathmandu.[23] In these two other urban settlements, the *dhimay* groups do not function as *guthi* and their membership remains optional; the possibility of changing one's affiliation from one association to another is always open. As a matter of fact, they are much like other musical groups (cf. passim), widespread among Newar Maharjan and differing greatly from the *dhimay guthi* described above. It must be added that, in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, *dhimay* apprenticeship is not so formal and cyclically organised as in Kathmandu. Before discussing this peculiar model, it is necessary to complete our picture of the social organisation of the Maharjan of Kathmandu and to examine in some detail its main elements.

Power and social control

Power and authority among the Maharjan are based principally on these musical associations. As is the case everywhere else among Newars, the principle of seniority prevails. The elders, *thakāli*, conduct the main rituals and are recognised as the decision-makers. The juniors, *kwakāli*, are

23 I personally carried out interviews in Lalitpur on this subject (1991). In this city, membership to the *dhimay* associations (locally known as *dhimay mākāḥ* and restricted only to farmers) is never required. Consequently, the Maharjan residential quarter is not a closed corporate body perpetuating itself through hereditary affiliation as in Kathmandu. Yet, every Maharjan quarter has its own Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine and its own music house called *mākāḥ chē* ('common house'). For Bhaktapur, see Wegner 1986, and for Kirtipur, Grandin 1989: Chapter II. In these two localities, membership to the *dhimay* groups is open to castes other than farmers as well.

totally dependent and do not exert any control over the group. Within the *twāḥ*, the ultimate authority rests on the seniormost men. These five *thakāli* are the key figures of the Quarter and the conservators of traditional usage. They decide 'what is right *(jyū)* and what is wrong *(majyū)*'. They have ceremonial privileges such as being served first at feasts and wearing white turbans on ritual occasions. Above all, these five elders are in a position to expel any person who marries a Maharjan within the *twāḥ*, who settles down with a non-Maharjan girl, or who has sexual relations with women from impure castes. Such exclusion, *twāḥlā pitwa cwagu* in Newar, is drastic. As soon as the sanction is made, the *guthiyār* are compelled to refrain from sharing cooked rice with the concerned person. The offender is banned both from his *twāḥ guthi* and from his funeral association, *sanāḥ gu* (cf. infra). He is in fact expelled from his caste. The exclusion may affect the whole family if the relatives of the excluded person continue to house him.

The importance of seniority is further exemplified by the old-age life-cycle rituals called *burā jākwa* (or *jākwa)*. The first of these ceremonies is performed by a married couple when the husband reaches the age of 77 years, seven months, seven days, seven *ghau,* and seven *palā* (cf. Levy 1990: 676f). On that day, the old man and his wife are drawn by their children and grandchildren in a small wheeled and roofed chariot *(ratha)* around the courtyard adjoining their house and around their quarter. When the chariot ride is finished, the family members and friends make offerings to the old couple and bow down at their feet. A large feast plate containing eighty-four food items (New. *tāy bhū)* is then presented to them. This ritual, which is still very popular among the Maharjan of Kathmandu, is said to insure a good rebirth. It increases considerably the status of the elderly couple. The *thakāli* and his wife are now on a higher plane of human existence; they are considered to be quasi-divine. Such persons will relinquish active control over family affairs. The man who has been drawn in this chariot is thus excused from work in the fields and from carrying the *khaḥmhū* basket that is a distinctive Maharjan agricultural implement. He is also entitled to a special cremation in which he is carried to the *ghāṭ (masān)* and cremated in a seated position. Other consecration rituals are performed when an elder reaches the age of 83, 89 and 92.

Music also plays an important role in the hierarchy and complements the seniority principle. The *kaji,* the man in charge of the *ākhāḥ chẽ* and of the *dhimay* drums, is a person of high rank in the Quarter. He is served

sixth, just after the five elders, during the feasts, and receives the tongue of the sacrificed animal—a part of high religious value. The *kaji* is assisted by a messenger, *hāmu*, whose duty is to keep the members of the association informed of the festival calendar. As this man is supposed to run fast, he is given the front legs of every animal offered to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. During feasts, the *kaji* is helped by special cooks, *sulīṃ*, who are in charge of brewing the maize- or rice-beer.

The music teachers too are influential persons within the *twāḥ*. Their functions are neither hereditary nor connected with seniority. One becomes a *guru* by one's own talent and capacity alone. However, a teacher will retain his title and prestige until death, even if he cannot play the drum any more. The *guru* are much respected. They conduct ceremonies dedicated to the god of music along with the elders of the Quarter and often wear large white turbans on such occasions. Despite that, their power is considerably less than that of *thakāli*. They come after the five elders (and the *kaji)* during the ritual feasts.

Age-classes are another crucial element of the sociopolitical structure of the Maharjan of Kathmandu. The male population of each Quarter is divided among five or six classes ranging in age from fifteen or sixteen to over seventy. The age groupings are crystallised through the *waḥlāḥ cwanegu* twelve-year initiation and the subsequent *dhimay* apprenticeship. All the men who undergo the initiation together and who follow the same drum-instruction constitute a formal, life-long group called *sibā gwegu* or *sibā khalaḥ*.[24] This is a definite organisation with common funds and an official leader, the *thakāli*, i.e., its seniormost member, at its head. The members of a newly constituted group gather every month on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight (New. *caḥray)*. They first worship the main local deity of the Quarter and then have a joint feast in the leader's house. The first of these meals, *sibā gwegu bhway*, occurs in the month of Pauṣ (December-January), while the last one—to which all male members of the *twāḥ* are invited—is held in the month of Māgh (January-February). During the third year, the young boys of the age-class also have to hang long white pieces of cloth from the top of the much-revered stūpa of Swayambhū (New. *patāḥ chāyegu)*. In short, the Maharjan age-grades are organised exclusively on the basis of the Quar-

24 *Sibā gwegu*, from *sevā* (Skt.), 'service of a deity or a king' and *gwegu* (New) 'to gather.' Manandhar (1986: 261) gives for *sibā bhway* 'A kind of feast held periodically in honour of a deity usually in the evenings after worship'.

ter and are mainly religious in nature. They do not serve distinct public functions but create a strong bond among their members and a strict sense of age hierarchy in the Quarter. No feminine equivalents exist.

What about social control within the city? There is no caste council controlling behaviour among the whole Maharjan community of Kathmandu. Infringements of the rules of inter-caste relations (eating, drinking, sex or marriage with forbidden castes) are dealt with by the Quarter group itself. Consequently, the elders' powers do not extend outside boundaries of their *twāḥ*. However, the two seniormost members of each quarter—strictly speaking, the *thakāli* and the *nwakū*—are invited from time to time to a special feast by a Maharjan wishing to improve his prestige within the group or to obtain some merit for his future life. This feast, called *thakāli-nwakū bhway*, is organised on ceremonial occasions such as life-cycle rituals, consecration of a new lineage-head, or pacification ceremonies (New. and Nep. *saptāha)*. In theory, the assembly should include 64 guests ('32 quarters' x 2). In fact, from the 28 Quarters that the Maharjan of Kathmandu presently compose of, all the concerned elders do not come. At the feast which I attended in March 1992, on the occasion of a funeral commemoration, only 36 *thakāli-nwakū* were present, representing 18 Quarters. The others were busy or forgot the time. The assembly of elders was the object of much reverence on the part of the organising family and was presented with a great quantity of food, cigarettes (or water pipes) and alcohol. No hierarchical order of seating was imposed. The *thakāli* arriving first sat in the first position and so forth, in one long line. As a rule, the general outlook of Maharjan territorial organisation is strictly egalitarian.[25] Such gatherings are still very popular among the Maharjan of Kathmandu and have no parallel, to my knowledge, in Bhaktapur or Lalitpur. The invitations are delivered by a reliable person fully aware of the latest segmentations within the community's groupings. The potters (Prajāpatī) of the city are never invited to this type of feast.

Kinship and marriage

The *twāḥ* is neither a lineage nor a clan. Its members are not able to trace kin links among themselves in the direct line, and they don't see themselves as having all descended from a common male ancestor either.

25 The Maharjan of Kathmandu are divided into subgroups such as: Mā, Mū, Dagu, Sāpu, Mepu, Bwasyā (or Bwasi), etc, the origin of which point to specific occupations during the Malla Period. All these groups are of equal status and intermarry.

They are divided into several unnamed patrilineages (New. *kawāḥ)* which are characterised by their shallowness. A lineage generally encompasses four to twelve households that are separated but still live near each other. Among these kinsmen, the Maharjan distinguish two degrees of agnatic links: 1) up to the third generation, the close agnates, *phuki*; and 2) up to the fifth generation, the distant agnates, *jhinu*. As a rule, a lineage includes all the *phuki* kinsmen and some *jhinu*. After six generations, and sometimes even before, the memory of the genealogical links vanishes and the group splits up. Quarrels and migrations contribute to the process of fragmentation whereby a single lineage group splinters into new, autonomous *kawāḥ*. This corresponds more or less to the matrimonial prohibitions. Ideally, it is not permissible to marry in the paternal line within seven generations and in the maternal line within three. In practice, some marriages do occur with closer relatives if there is a 'good reason' for the alliance in question, but such cases are exceptional since most of the kinsmen, whether close or distant, belong to the same exogamous *twāḥ*. By and large, it is thus unnecessary to maintain genealogical records once a depth of seven generations has been reached.

Kinship units are mainly ritual units. The agnatic kinsmen have to observe birth and death pollution rules for each other. Let us consider, for instance, death, which entails numerous prescriptions. All the kinsmen of the patriline must participate in the funeral procession towards the cremation ground (New. *sanāḥ wanigu)* and mourn (New. *dukhā cwanegu)* for at least twelve days. Accordingly, they have to wear a white cap (New. *tapuli bāray yāygu)* and non-leather shoes. They also have to abstain from eating meat in their house, but surprisingly enough, they are allowed to eat meat outside their house and to join festive meals if they are invited. Whereas the *jhinu* respect these prohibitions for twelve days, i.e., until the *ghaḥsū* funeral ceremony, the *phuki* will remain polluted for 45 days. The closest relatives of the dead person, for their part, remain impure for a whole year. To turn to another aspect of the question, it is worth noting that a communal funeral commemoration is held every year, some days after the Indra Jātrā festival (August-September), in honour of the kin-group's deceased. This ceremony, which is performed by the whole lineage under the direction of a Vajrācārya priest, is called *sora śrāddha*. It brings the corporate dimension of the kin-group in religious affairs into particularly clear focus.

Yet the main way in which the lineage expresses its unity is through its deity cult. Each *kawāḥ* possesses its own deity, *digudyaḥ*, which is

represented by natural uncarved stones. These stones are located outside of the old town wall boundaries, on a meadow. They are worshipped once a year in Baiśākh (April-May), and sometimes twice a year, in Baiśākh and in Bhādra (August-September), at the time of the festival of Indra. The ceremony, *dev pujā*, lasts for four days. On the first day, the male agnates gather for a feast (New. *chwelā bhway)* in the house of the *thakāli*, i.e., the head of the lineage. On the second day, the kinsmen, including women and children, congregate in the open place devoted to the lineage deity and partake of a ceremonial meal together. On the last day, the kinsmen once again assemble in the house of the *thakāli* for a concluding feast (New. *pyenhu bhway)*. In the case of segmentation within the lineage, the new formed kin-group will still propitiate the same sacred stones, in the same spot, but at different times. They have become *bā-phuki*, 'split-agnates': although sharing a common ancestral deity, they no longer form a ritual unit and do not share the birth and death pollution of the group they have split from. As a rule, a Quarter includes different open places for their lineage deities. Notably enough, these lithic *digudyaḥ* are not revered the rest of the year. Yet, some lineages also have iconic representations of the lineage deity which are worshipped daily by their caretakers. Such statues are stored either turn by turn among the kinsmen or in the *thakāli*'s house. They are carried in procession to the relevant open altar of *digudyaḥ* outside the city, during the annual worship of the deity. The two forms, iconic and aniconic, refer to the same god, whose name is kept secret most of the time.

The *thakāli*, or the eldest male lineage member, exercises unchallenged moral authority in the group and plays an important ritual role. An elaborate ceremony (New. *thakāli luyegu)* marks his accession to the head of the lineage. During this ritual, specific to the Maharjan, all the lineage members worship the stone *digudyaḥ*, and a Vajrācārya priest conducts a fire-sacrifice in front of the lineage-deity. The next day, the male kinsmen pour sacred water from the roof of the house on the head of the newly consecrated *thakāli*. This water is then sprinkled all over the headman's house. Feasts organised on such occasions can bring together four to five hundred guests. They are so costly that fewer and fewer families convene them.

Although they do not form a kin-group, the members of a *twāḥ* regard themselves as vaguely consanguineous. They consider each other to be *dāju-bhāi,* 'elder brother-younger brother'. 'To be affiliated with the same Quarter,' a Maharjan told me, 'is equivalent to belonging to the same

family *(pariwār)*.' The *dhimay* drums, which are worshipped as one of the lineage deities of the group, reinforce this feeling. The *twāḥ* possibly originates from an old original kinship unit of which the ancient lineal ties have been lost through the centuries. But, more probably, territoriality (attachment to a given place) and consanguinity played an equal role in the making of such groupings. As in other parts of the world, common residence has also created fictive kinship links. However that may be, the Maharjan *twāḥ* is rigorously exogamous. Marriage within the Quarter social grouping is forbidden.[26] If somebody breaks this rule, he will be expelled from his *twāḥ* as well as from his lineage. Exogamy also concerns the families who have moved from their original ancestral neighbourhood. A Maharjan will remain a Watūmi, a Wāghaḥmi, etc,—derived from the name of his Quarter—and still bound by the rules of his group, even if he has settled beyond the old town. Consequently, marriages are only arranged after a great deal of inquiries about the compatibility of the two families involved: the *twāḥ* names of the young couple are a crucial point. To sum up, the Quarter is a social unit which remains active and corporate even if the residential links disappear or splinter after a migration. On the other hand, a farmer can marry a Maharjan girl living in the same Quarter if she does not belong to the same original *twāḥ*.

As previously indicated, the Maharjan of Kathmandu marry mainly among themselves. They are extremely reluctant to contract a marriage with farmers from rural areas and other Newar towns. As one informant pointed out, 'We all belong to the same caste, but our customs are too different.' In fact, the Maharjan of the capital feel themselves to be superior to all other farmers. To marry a girl from outside will entail a loss of reputation, *ijjat*, within the community. It must also be said that this group has developed a very sophisticated and urbanised way of life compared to the Maharjan of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, whose manners remain more rustic. Furthermore, intermarriages with Śreṣṭha (Newar traders) are very rare. However rich he may be, the Maharjan of Kathmandu takes great pride in being a farmer[27] and displays a strong attachment to his caste.

26 This rule is sometimes contested. Some informants explain that persons attached to the same Quarter can intermarry if they belong to two different lineage deity-groupings *(digudyaḥ)*. In that case, it is explained, the 'root (New. *hā*) of husband and wife are different'. But the two above-mentioned meanings of *twāḥ*, residential quarter and social grouping, are perhaps confused here.

27 The word *Jyāpu*, for instance, is not considered to be depreciatory among themselves.

To become Śreṣṭha through an upward inter-caste alliance is alien to his way of thinking.

Segmentation and peculiar cases

To turn back to the territorial organisation, some *dhimay* musical groupings have split up during the last three decades on account of internal quarrels. Three cases may be mentioned: Thã Bahī (=Thamel), Nāypāco-Phasigāṃ, and Bhindyaḥ (=Bhimsenthān). In Thã Bahī, the division goes back to the early 1970s. It was due to a marriage between two members of the *twāḥ*. A small group in the association stood up for the couple and refused the excommunication pronounced by the elders. This minority seceded and established its own *guthi*. Accordingly, the Quarter today includes two *dhimay* musical associations, each possessing its own music house. However, the two groups still worship the same Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine. Though the Maharjan of Thã Bahī nowadays consider that their locality is made up of two different *twāḥ*, the two groups do not intermarry. In Nāypāco-Phasigāṃ, the segmentation evolved in two stages. The Maharjan of Phasigāṃ first separated from Nāypāco and then divided one more time among themselves. The present three offshoot *dhimay guthi* are totally independent for ritual purposes. Yet, as in the previous instance, they still forbid their members from marrying each other.

Asã, one of the most important and ancient crossroads of Kathmandu, presents another picture. This *twāḥ* split up long ago into two units: Bhoṭāhiti Kisāni and Kamalāchi Pilatũ (=Konāy *twāḥ*), corresponding to two well-demarcated kinship groups. Only the first one possesses a *dhimay guthi*, the second has only a *dāphā guthi*, another musical association to which we will turn shortly. The two groups worship the god of music separately, at two different cult-sites. However, they exchange their musical ensembles during the various religious festivals and walk in procession behind the same *dhunyā* bamboo pole. Traditionally, marriages between the two groups were prohibited, but some years ago Bhoṭāhiti Kisāni and Kamalāchi Pilatũ started intermarrying. The small size of the associations (17 and 18 members respectively) undoubtedly explains this peculiar situation.

In spite of the modernisation that is rapidly transforming the urban landscape, and notwithstanding the growing fashion for new types of music, western or Indian, among the younger generation, the traditional music groups are still very active and continue to exert social control over their members. The Maharjan of Kathmandu are still attached to

these old structures, presumably because they help maintain their identity in an urban, developing world. However, in Dugã Bahī, a *twāḥ* located near the building of the Nepal Airlines Corporation, the *dhimay* association disappeared in the early 1980s. Although the rule of exogamy is still in force, the Quarter has lost its emblematic drums. The Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine is nowadays deserted and the *ākhāḥ chẽ* has been sold to an outsider. Such cultural losses are likely to occur in other neighbourhoods. The accelerated urban expansion of Kathmandu is a serious threat to the socio-religious framework of the whole city.

The optional musical groups

Two other instrumental music groups play an important role in the life and soundscape of the Maharjan of Kathmandu: the *dāphā khalaḥ* and the *bāṃsuri khalaḥ.* The first is characterised by devotional singing and a vertical flute, *bay,* which has a beaked mounthpiece.[28] It is played together with drums such as *khīṃ, koṃcākhīṃ,* occasionally *ḍholak,* and the long trumpet, *pwãgā.* The *dāphā* music, which belongs to the ceremonial type, seems to have been introduced into the Kathmandu Valley from Mithila, North India, during the 12th-13th centuries CE (cf. Grandin 1989: 71ff.). Today, most of the songs are in the Newar language. The name of the second musical ensemble refers to the transverse flute *bāṃsuri,* of which three different sizes exist. This flute, made of wood, has six finger holes in the front and one in the back. Like the *dhimay* drum, it is peculiar to the Maharjan caste. The *bāṃsuri* instrumental group also includes two-headed drums, such as *ḍholak, khīṃ,* or *pachimā,* which are struck on both sides with the hand, and two pairs of cymbals: *jhyāli* and *tāḥ* (Aubert 1988: 38f.).

Each of these groups is in possession of a separate meeting and practising place, *ākhāḥ chẽ.* The apprenticeship does not require ceremonies as formal as those associated with the *dhimay* drums: it is done 'whenever one wishes,' not on fixed dates. Once a year, during the cold season, the members of the association jointly worship the local god of music and take a festive meal together. This annual ritual nearly always demands a buffalo sacrifice. It may be noted that the main song teacher comes first, before the drum teachers, in the internal hierarchy.

Dāphā and *bāṃsuri khalaḥ* play at major festivals throughout the year and at most ceremonies linked with life-cycle rituals. They are found

28 For general information on *dāphā khalaḥ* among Newars, cf. Aubert (1988: 38) and Grandin (1989: Chapter II).

in all important ritual processions. During festivals, they often collaborate with *dhimay* drum groups. In that case, the *dhimay* drummers march in front, with the *dhunyā* pole. *Dāphā* comes in second position, behind the statue of the divinity which is carried in a palanquin. The *bāṃsuri* ensemble closes the procession. In the upper part of Kathmandu, *pwãgã* trumpets are played only once a year, during the cow festival, Sā Pāru, August-September: on that occasion, the players are expected to circumambulate the entire old city.

As a rule, each Maharjan Quarter possesses its own *dāphā* and *bāṃsuri* groups. However, in contrast with *dhimay* ensembles, these associations are entirely voluntary. Their composition may change from year to year. Although it does not happen often, it is theoretically possible for a Watūmi or for a Marumi to belong to a *dāphā* group from another Maharjan Quarter. In the same way, a farmer who has moved from one part of the city to another can freely change his *dāphā* and *bāṃsuri* membership. As far as the caste is concerned, these two groups are composed only of Maharjan. Mānandhar, Prajāpatī, and some Udās have their own *dāphā* music groups.

In principle, a farmer belongs to three different musical groups at the same time: the compulsory *dhimay guthi* and the optional *dāphā* and *bāṃsuri khalaḥ*. The latter two groups have suffered much more from the 'modernisation' of the city than the first one. *Dāphā* and *bāṃsuri khalaḥ* are severely experiencing the effects of social change; their numbers are in decline and some groups have been totally dismantled. In some cases, several Quarters have joined together to keep their musical tradition alive.

Funeral associations and cremation societies

Every Maharjan householder also belongs to a funeral association locally known as *sanāḥ gu*.[29] It has been widely shown that this type of grouping is of paramount importance in Newar society (Toffin 1984: 283-317). Its main function is to organise funerals and to promote solidarity during them. The members have to attend the death procession whenever somebody in the group dies. They carry the corpse—and, if possible, the fire used to light the funeral pyre—and pay their respects to the bereaved family. These activities entail temporary pollution: before coming back to their house, the *guthiyār* members purify themselves by

29 *Sanāḥ*, probably from Skt., *snāna*, 'holy bath'; *gu* is a short form of *guthi*.

washing their face (New. *khwāḥ silegu)* at the river. The family of the dead person, for its part, has to invite all the fellow *guthiyār* some days after the cremation to share some food.

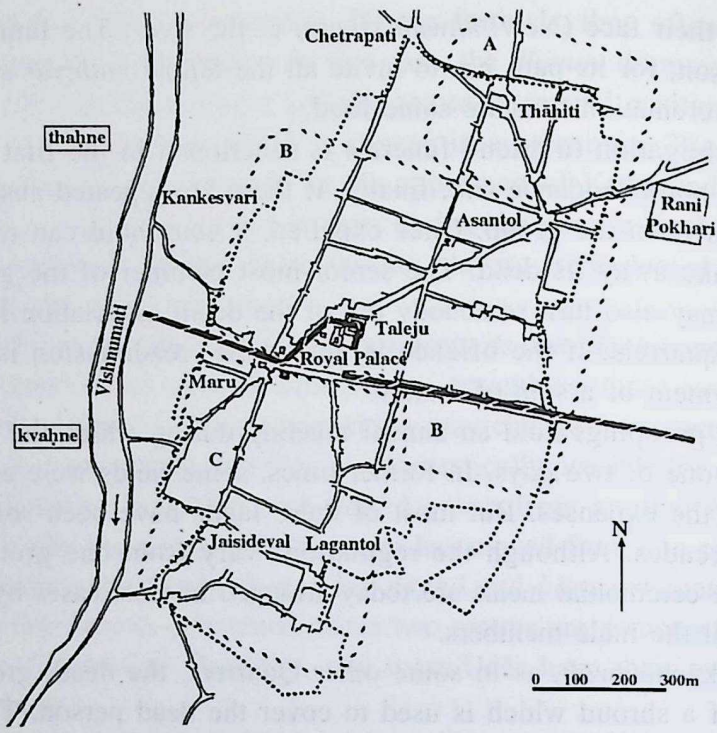
The obligation to attend funerals is sanctioned in the first place by fines for non-attendance and, finally, if there are repeated absences, by expulsion from the group. Once expelled, a household can rely on no one to take away its dead. The senior-most member of the group, the *thakāli*, may also turn somebody out of the death association in case of internal quarrels. If the offence is not severe, readmission is allowed upon payment of a sum of money.

These groupings hold an annual meeting during which the members feast for one or two days. In former times, some fields were earmarked to cover the expenses. But most of these lands have been sold during recent decades. Although the regulations vary from one group to another, the ceremonial meals are today arranged in most cases by rotation among all the male members.

In Bakāchẽ *twāḥ*, as in some other Quarters, the death group is in charge of a shroud which is used to cover the dead person. This cloth (New. *dewã)* of saffron colour is taken off just before cremation. It is worshipped daily by its caretaker as the embodiment of a divinity: Bhairava, Indrāyaṇī, Bhadrakālī, etc, depending on the association. The shroud is stored in a wooden box or a bamboo basket and is much dreaded. Members take turns (every year) to store the shroud which they do in a secluded part of their house. Some informants hold that strange noises can be heard from this place one day before a death occurs in the group. In this way, the shroud deity announces the death to come. It is also believed that the *dewã* deity possesses the caretaker *(pāḥlā)* during the annual meeting of the group. Fairly often, a Bhairava wooden statue is kept along with this cloth and is displayed on special occasions.

As with the optional music groups, the funeral association is not hereditary. A Maharjan joins the group of his choice.[30] It is an affair of 'religion', *dharma*, it is said, and some farmers even belong simultaneously to two funeral groups if they are willing to pay the related contributions. However, there is a close link between the musical *dhimay guthi* and the funeral *sanāḥ gu*. In some Quarters, the two groupings coincide totally: to belong to the one automatically entails membership in the other.

30 Only when the head of the household dies or the joint family separates does the possibility arise of anyone else in the family joining the *sanāḥ gu.*



..... *upākū vanegu* (Indra Jātrā) procession around Kathmandu city

- - - - borders between the three parts of Old Kathmandu (A: upper part of the city; B: middle part; C: lower part)

—— border line between the upper part *(thaḷne)* and the lower part *(kvaḷne* or *kone)* of the city

Fig. 3. **Kathmandu city**

Furthermore, when somebody is excluded from his Quarter, he will generally be excommunicated also from his funeral association. This close connection can be explained, at least partly, by the obligations a new member is expected to fulfil. As a matter of fact, a newcomer is immediately given the turn to organise the annual feasts and associated rituals. As such duties entail considerable expense, more often than not, a household will be reluctant to shift from one group to another. Mobility is much limited by this financial commitment.

The Maharjan of Kathmandu also use the services of cremation societies called *sī guthi.* The main purpose of these groups is the performance of certain death rituals and the burning of the dead body. Each Quarter generally boasts of one or two *sī guthi* made up of four to ten members called *gwā.* This function passes from father to eldest son. *Gwā*

hold an annual feast during the full moon of Mārga (November-December). During this meeting, an animal is sacrificed and its head is divided and eaten by the active members according to strict hierarchical rules. In some cases, *gwā* also take care of the shroud deity. Although they are associated with death and cremation, these persons are not despised. They have quite a high status in the Maharjan community and are addressed in honorific terms. They are invited to most of the life-cycle rituals and are seated in a position even preceding the headman of the lineage.[31]

The fund of cremation societies derive from contributions. The *gwā* specialists also used to take the silver and gold coins put by the bereaved family in the mouth of the corpse. These gifts are said to ensure the soul of the dead person a secure journey towards the other world.

Distribution of the '32 *twāḥ*' in the city

How are the 32 or, more precisely, the 28 *twāḥ* distributed in the city? Before answering this question, we have to recall the ancient spatial structure of Kathmandu, which still dominates the religious life of the Newar inhabitants down to the present day. Traditionally, Old Kathmandu is divided into three parts: the 'upper' part *(thaḥne)*, the 'lower' part *(kone* or *kwaḥne)*, and the 'middle' *(dathu)*. As in other Newar settlements, this division has nothing to do with altitude or topography. It corresponds to the direction of the nearest river: 'up' means upstream, 'down' downstream. In Kathmandu, it is the Vishnumati river— flowing north to south, to the west of the old town—which determines these orientations. Consequently, 'up' is associated with north, 'down' with south.[32]

The border between the upper part and the middle runs through the market area of Asan *ṭol*, a crossroads where six lanes meet.[33] It is marked

31 According to Gellner (1987: 390), the *gwā* inspire fear because of their traditional speciality. Some informants say that they have something of Bhairava's power.

32 For the social structure of the Newar of the southern part of Kathmandu, including some information on Maharjans of that area, cf. Sakya, 2000.

33 I owe this piece of information to Dhanavajra Vajracharya. See also the map of Gutschow (1979*b*: 252). Pradhan (1986: 354) also refers to this image of a fish (Asan ṭol) as a boundary between the upper and the middle sections of the city. According to Locke (1980: 28f.), the three parts of Kathmandu city were once upon a time called: Suvarnapranali *(thaḥne)*, Kantipur *(dathu)*, and Kasthamandap *(kwaḥne)*. In his recent book (1986), Locke speaks of four sections in Old Kathmandu (Dathu Puī, Tathu Puī, Kwathu Puī and Lāyakū Puī), with the royal palace forming a special division separated from the middle part. However, this pattern seems to be known only to Vajrācārya Buddhist priests and Śākyas.

by a small stone image of a fish (New. *nyā lhwā)* set into the pavement of the square, in front of the Annapūrṇa temple. For their part, the boundaries between the 'middle' and the 'down' sections are fixed by the shrine of Taleju attached to the former royal palace of Hanumān Ḍhokā, Makhā *ṭol*. The lion statue which defends the left door leading to this temple—the old main entrance to the palace—is bound to the 'middle,' the other lion guarding the right door is linked with the 'down' part of the city. The list of the 32 Maharjan *twāḥ* published by Nepali authors is based on this old tripartition. According to this list, the upper part includes Thā Bahī, Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ, Bijyāpu, Ini Bāhāḥ, Konāy *twāḥ,* Jamo, Tyauḍa, Asā, and Maytī; the central part, Tyāgaḥ, Nyeta or Nyata, Kilāghaḥ, Yaṭakhā, Wāghaḥ, Watū, Mahābauddha, Dugā Bahī, Khicapukhū, Makhā and Maru; and the lower part, Om Bāhāḥ, Jyā Bāhāḥ, Kohiti, Yutu, Brahmū *twāḥ* Bhalnanī, Kumāḥnanī, Phasigāṃ, Nāypāco, Tokā Bāhāḥ, Taḥnanī, and Lasakaḥnanī.

Nowadays this tripartite structure of the Maharjan Quarters is known only to a few Newar scholars. For the farmers as well as for most of the Newar castes living in Kathmandu, the city is presently divided into only two halves: 'up' and 'down'. According to this view, it is the Hanumān Ḍhokā royal palace which marks the ideal centre of the town. The above-mentioned lion defending the left side of the Taleju temple is associated with the upper part, the one guarding the right side of the temple with the lower part. New Road, which was opened by Juddha Shumshere Rana after the earthquake of 1934 and which laid down a central east-west axis thoroughfare in the heart of the old city, is also an important landmark. The area north of this line is considered to belong to the upper part, the one south of New Road to the lower part. In other words, the 'middle' has, with time, considerably narrowed: it, today, comprises only the Hanumān Ḍhokā royal complex and the adjoining Maru quarter around the wooden temple *(sattal)* of Kāṣṭhamaṇḍap. The festivals of Kathmandu reveal the centrality of the king's palace in the urban space: all important urban rituals commanding the symbolic unity of the town occur in that very place.

Accordingly, the Maharjan at present distribute their 28 Quarters as follows: 1) upper part; Asā (Bhoṭāhiti Kisāni and Kamalāchi Pilatū), Chwāsalubi, Dugā Bahī, Jamo, Kilāghaḥ, Kusubiyālāchi, Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ, Māgaḥ, Mahābauddha, Makhā, Nyeta, Pukhūdyāṃ, Thā Bahī, Tyauḍa, Wāgḥaḥ, Walāchi, Watū, and Yaṭakhā; 2) lower part: Bakāchē, Bhindyaḥ, Kohiti, Musum Bāhāḥ, Nāypāco, Om Bāhāḥ, Tokā Bāhāḥ, Yaṅgā and

Table 2: **The present Maharjan twāḥ of Kathmandu city**

Name of the *twāḥ*	Households	Members of *dhimay guthi*	Outside/ inside the town	*Waḥlāḥ cwanegu* initiation	Cremation site *(masān)*	Main divinity	Bamboo pole *(dhunyā)*
Upper part: *thaḥne*							
Asā							
Bhoṭāhiti Kisāni	17	16	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Annapūrṇa	+
Kamalāchi Pilatū	18	18	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Annapūrṇa	-
Chvāsalubi	50	145	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Mhaipi Ajimā	+
Dugā Bahī	16	16	inside	Bhadrakālī	Teku	Bhadrakālī	-
Jamo	100	100	outside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Kamalādi Ganedyaḥ	+
Kilāghaḥ	185	180	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Hāti Ganedyaḥ	+
Kusubiyālāchi	25	25	inside	Sighaḥ	Luti Ajimā	Svāmsaphū Ganedyaḥ	+
Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ	84	84	inside	Sighaḥ	Luti Ajimā	-	+
Māgaḥ	16	157	outside	Maitī Devī	Maitī	Maitī Devī	-
Mahābaudha or Mahābu	70	70	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Luchumaru Ajimā	+
Makhā	2	80	inside	Swayambhū	Konga Ajimā	Tarāni Ajimā	+
Nyeta	150	90	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	Śvetā Kālī	+
Pukhūdyāṃ	175	175	inside	Bhadrakāḷī	Teku	Bhadrakālī	+
Thā Bahī	126	111	outside outside	Swayambhū Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā Luti Ajimā	Garujujū Garujujū	+ +
Tyauḍa	167	180	inside	Swayambhū Luti Ajimā	Luti Ajimā	Luti Ajimā	+

Name of the *twāḥ*	Households	Members of *dhimay guthi*	Outside/ inside the town	*Waḥlāḥ cwanegu* initiation	Cremation site *(masān)*	Main divinity	Bamboo pole *(dhunyā)*
Wāghaḥ	58	60	inside	Swayambhū	Luti Ajimā	āudyaḥ (Ākāśa Bhairava)	+
Walāchi	50	50	inside	Sighaḥ	Luti Ajimā	Narsiṅgh Āju	-
Watū	100	150	inside	Bhadrakālī	Luti Ajimā	Gāchidyaḥ/ Bhadrakālī	+
Yaṭakhā	100	70	inside	Swayambhū	Kaṅga Ajimā	Kaṅga Ajimā	+
Central part: *dathu*							
Maru	161	161	inside	Swayambhū	Lakha Tīrtha	Maru Ganedyaḥ Aśōk Vināyak	+
Lower part: *kone* or *kwaḥne*							
Bakāchē	150	70	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
Bhindyaḥ	87	52	inside		Teku	Bhindyaḥ	
		35			Teku	Bhindyaḥ	-
Kohiti	75	75	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Nīl Vārāhī	-
Musum Bāhāḥ	300	300	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
Nāypāco	90	135	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
(Phasigāṃ)	70	40 and 80		Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
Om Bāhāḥ	84	70	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	+
Tokā Bāhāḥ	130	140	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
Yaṅgā	36	19	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-
Yutunanī	40	105	inside	Pacalī Bhairava	Teku	Pacalī Bhairava	-

The Prajāpatī (potter) *twāḥ* are Jyāthā, Tyāghaḥ, Kumānanī, Woṃde, Kohiti, and Dhwākā Bāhāḥ

Yutunanī; and 3) middle part: Maru (see Table 2). The case of Pukhūdyāṃ is problematic: despite being located to the south of New Road and of Hanumān Ḍhokā, this quarter is generally assigned to the upper part. We are not presently in a position to explain this anomaly. In terms of demography, 49.5 per cent of the Maharjan population live in the upper part, 50.5 per cent in the lower part (the figure for the middle being negligible). But, as far as density is concerned, the largest concentrations of farmers are to be found in the south. To be sure, this part of the city displays a much more rural pattern than the northern one.

The bipartition of the urban structure does not involve any hierarchical social order within the population. Nor does it entail any marriage rules. Nevertheless, it is exceedingly important for the Maharjan as well as for all Newars of Kathmandu, especially in the religious sphere. Depending on the half to which one belongs, ritual practices are somewhat different. Three examples will illustrate this point. First, the quarters from the lower part of the city cremate their dead at Teku, at the confluence of the Vishnumati and Bagmati rivers, near the Pacalī Bhairava temple, whereas most of the quarters belonging to the upper part use the cremation ground located near Luti and Kaṅga Ajimā, along the Vishnumati river. Secondly, all the quarters of the southern part are preferentially associated with Pacalī Bhairava and send their children to that place for the *waḥlāḥ cwanegu* initiation, whereas quarters from the north are individually attached to a specific god or goddess such as Nyeta Ajimā, Annapūrṇa, Luti Ajimā, Mhaipi Ajimā, Kamalādi Ganedyaḥ, etc. Finally, in contrast to the northern *twāḥ* (with the exception of Walāchi), the southern quarters do not carry a *dhunyā* pole along with their musical instruments (save Om Bāhāḥ).

Thus, the position of the quarter within the two ritual halves of the town ascribes some specific ritual usages or customs, and contributes greatly to the identity of the *twāḥ*. The cases which do not conform to this pattern can be explained either by historical circumstances, sometimes difficult to reconstruct, or by specific local prohibitions. For instance, Pukhūdhyāṃ and Dugā Bahī members were obliged to leave their original cremation ground near Tukuca river, to the east of Kathmandu, when Siṅgha Darbār was constructed at this very place during the Rana Period. They chose another burning area near Bhadrakālī temple, but were displaced from this spot as well by the construction of the Army Headquarters. Although belonging to the upper part of the city, they then shifted to Teku. Now, why do the Maharjan of Walāchi have no

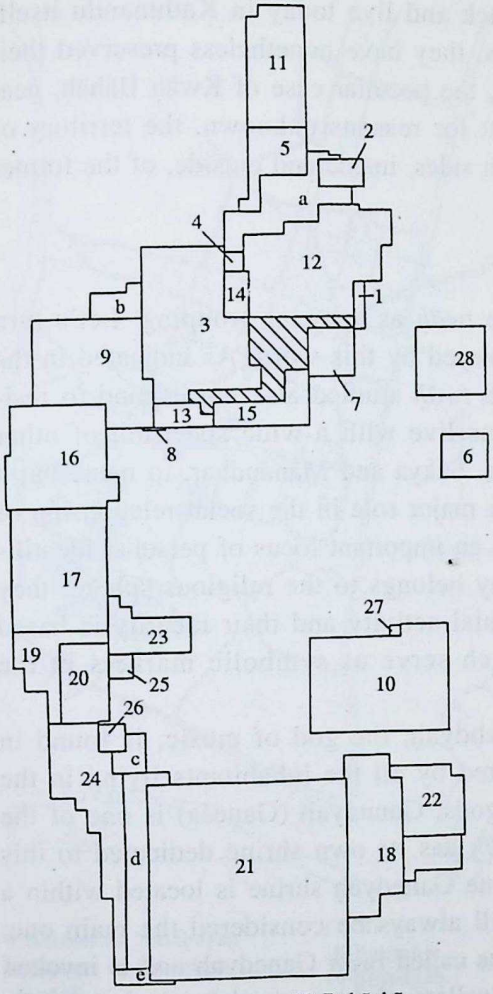
dhunyā pole? It is said that the tutelary divinity of the quarter (Narsīṅghdyaḥ) will be offended if the shadow of such a pole crosses his altar. The presence of the *dhunyā* pole in Om Bāhāḥ is more enigmatic. Perhaps it has something to do with the high ritual status with which the members of this *twāḥ* are credited. Moreover, we have to consider that both Om Bāhāḥ and Pukhūdyāṃ lie on the border line between the two parts of the city.

Although there remain some blank spaces on the map, the 28 quarters mentioned above cover most of Old Kathmandu. In fact, the Maharjan live not only on the fringes of the settlement, but also in its centre, around the royal palace, and in its most commercial zones. This brings us to another important facet of the spatial arrangement of the capital's farmers: the inside/outside opposition *(dune/pine* in Newar). Out of the 28 Maharjan *twāḥ*, only three are located outside the city. The rest lie within Kathmandu. This distribution obviously corresponds to the protective wall which girdled the city during the Malla Period. As is well known, this rampart was dismantled by Prithvi Narayan Shah when the city was conquered in 1768. Moreover, the inner part of the city in distinguished from the outside by two Newar words, *ḍhokā dune/ḍhokā pine,* which explicitly refer to the gates of this wall. Although nothing is left of the ramparts' gates, old Newar dwellers are still able to indicate their locations. These places are endowed with specific symbolic qualities and mark religious threshold passages between the inner and the outer urban site. On the other hand, the limits of the walls are still present in the rituals, as illustrated by the yearly *upākū wanegu* funeral procession during the festival of Indra.[34]

How can we explain the presence of three quarters outside the historic core of the city? Thã Bahī, located in the north, today corresponds to the tourist zone of Thamel. It is apparently an old site. According to oral tradition, this locality was ruled by a minor king in ancient times (Locke 1986: 410). It was linked from the beginning with a Buddhist monastery (Thã Bahī) which still plays an important role in the religious life of Kathmandu and is included in some religious processions that circumambulate the whole city. Jamo, in the north-east, near the Nepal Academy, is a very ancient site as well, even more so perhaps than Thã

34 Cf. Slusser 1982/1: 92 and 1982/2: map 7. During this ritual, members of families who have been bereaved over the past year pass clockwise in procession around the old core city along an ordained route. This route coincides more or less with the line of the ancient city wall.

Fig. 4. **Number of Maharjan households by quarter, *twāḥ*, in Kathmandu, 1992**



1 Asā
2 Chwāsalubi
3 Kilāghaḥ
4 Kusubiyālāchi
5 Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ
6 Māgaḥ
7 Mahābauddha or Mahābu
8 Makhā
9 Nyeta
10 Pukhūdyāṃ
11 Thā Bahī
12 Tyauḍa
13 Wāghaḥ
14 Walāchi
15 Watū
16 Yaṭakhā
17 Maru
18 Bakāchē
19 Bhindyaḥ
20 Kohiti
21 Musum Bāhāḥ
22 Nāypāco (Phasigāṃ)
23 Om Bāhāḥ
24 Tokā Bāhāḥ
25 Yaṅgā
26 Yutunanī
27 Dugā Bahī
28 Jamo

Prajāpatī *twāḥ*
a) Jyāthā
b) Tyāghaḥ
c) Taṇnanī
d) Kumāṇnanī
e) Woṃde

Bahī. The existence of this locality is documented by inscriptions from the Licchavi Period: it was called Jamayambi at that time (Locke 1986: 404), and a Buddhist monastery, the Jamo Bāhā, still exists in this locality. Its origin seems to be linked with Seto Matsyendranāth, the major Buddhist deity of Kathmandu. Moreover, this god is also known by the name of Jamaleśvara—from the name of the locality. The quarter which developed on this spot was razed in 1903 during the construction of Lāl Darbār and Seto Darbār. The Jamomi then migrated to Newar residences in the periphery of Kathmandu (Bi-sālnagar, Bānsbāri, etc) and to the old core (Tyauḍa). Despite this destructuration, the Quarter has still maintained its socio-religious unity and still forms an exogamous group.

The history of Māgaḥ (Malīgaon), located 4 km east of the historic city, is less well documented. Oral tradition states that farmers from this zone originally came from Bhotāhiti, in the old centre. Unfortunately, the circumstances of this migration are unknown. The village of Māgaḥ is today populated by

a Maharjan subgroup, called Mū, whose main function is to cultivate ornamental flowers for the major temples of Kathmandu, including Taleju. Most of the Mū have moved back and live today in Kathmandu itself. Though scattered in many places, they have nonetheless preserved their identity and cohesion. In closing, the peculiar case of Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ, near Thāhiti, needs to be pointed out: for reasons unknown, the territory of this quarter spreads out from both sides, inside and outside, of the former town's ramparts.[35]

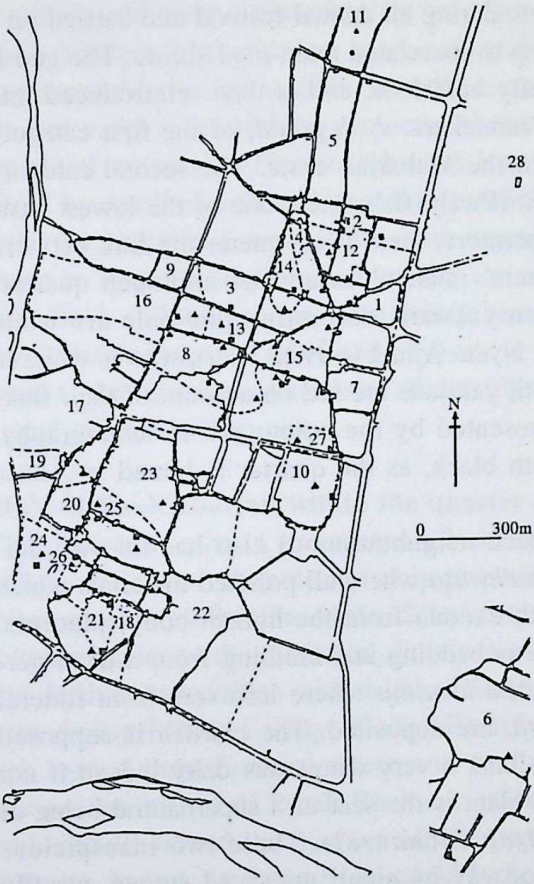
The *twāḥ* as a territorial unit

Thus far, we have described the *twāḥ* as a social grouping. Let's turn now to the second meaning conveyed by this word. As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, the 28 *twāḥ* studied also correspond to residential quarters where Maharjans live with a wide spectrum of other Newar castes: Śreṣṭha, Vajrācārya, Śākya and Mānandhar, to name but a few. These territorial units play a major role in the social relationship of the Newar town-dwellers and are an important locus of personal identification. Their main function today belongs to the religious sphere: they are the focus of special ceremonial activity and their identity is based on some common temples which serve as symbolic markers in the urban space.

As we saw, a shrine to Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the god of music, is found in every quarter. This deity is shared by all the inhabitants living in the *twāḥ*. Among the other quarter-gods, Ganedyaḥ (Gaṇeśa) is one of the most salient. Each of the 28 *twāḥ* has its own shrine dedicated to this god. In some cases, more than one Ganedyaḥ shrine is located within a quarter, but one among them will always be considered the main one. The image of this chief cult-site is called *twāḥ* Ganedyaḥ and is invoked with blood-sacrifices by all the dwellers of the territorial unit during life-cycle rituals and community-wide festivals. The elephant-headed god contributes greatly to the unity of the *twāḥ* and creates a long-term bond. If a Maharjan moves from one place to another, he will adopt the Ganedyaḥ of his new residence, but the offerings will be made in the name of the original quarter-god. Moreover, during some ceremonies such as the boys' initiation *kaytā pūjā* (to be distinguished from *waḥlāḥ cwanegu)*, the family must return to its natal Ganedyaḥ to perform cer-

35 See also the Nepali map of Kathmandu from the beginning of the 20th century published by Gutschow (1982: 110).

Fig. 5. **Approximative location of Maharjan *twāḥ* in Kathmandu**



▲ Shrines of Nāsaḥdyaḥ
■ Shrines of Ganedyaḥ

1 Asā
2 Chwāsalubi
3 Kilāghaḥ
4 Kusubiyālāchi
5 Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ
6 Māgaḥ
7 Mahābauddha or Mahābu
8 Makhā
9 Nyeta
10 Pukhūdyāṃ
11 Thā Bahī
12 Tyauḍa
13 Wāghaḥ
14 Walāchi
15 Watū
16 Yaṭakhā
17 Maru
18 Bakāchē
19 Bhindyaḥ
20 Kohiti
21 Musum Bāhāḥ
22 Nāypāco (Phasigāṃ)
23 Om Bāhāḥ
24 Tokā Bāhāḥ
25 Yaṅgā
26 Yutunanī
27 Dugā Bahī
28 Jamo

Prajāpatī *twāḥ*
a) Jyāthā
b) Tyāghaḥ
c) Taṇnanī
d) Kumāṇnanī
e) Womde

tain rituals. In all but a few cases, the *twāḥ* Ganedyaḥ has no specific priest attached to him. When there is one (like in Kilāghaḥ), he belongs to the farmers' caste.

Most of the quarters also have a special tutelary deity in addition to their central Ganedyaḥ and Nāsaḥdyaḥ. This patron deity protects its territorial area in return for blood-sacrifices. In this respect, the two halves of the city must be dissociated once again. In the lower part, all the *twāḥ* are collectively bound to Pacalī Bhairava (even Kohiti and Bhindyaḥ, who are under the tutelage of an additional deity). In the upper part, each quarter has a peculiar protective god: either a Bhairava (New. Ājudyaḥ), or an Ajimā, or a Ganedyaḥ. According to a widespread model within the Newar pantheon, each of these territorial divinities has two shrines. The main one (New. *pīgā)* is located within the precincts of the quarter or at the periphery of the town, outside of the old wall boundaries. The deity is represented either by a fixed iconic image or

by an uncarved stone. The other shrine (New. *dyaḥ chẽ)* is always situated within the *twāḥ* and houses a portable statue of the god. This statue is taken outside into the streets during an annual festival and carried on a palanquin (New. *khat jātrā)* up to its related main *pīgã* shrine. The god is offered some sacrifices, chiefly buffaloes, and is then reintroduced into his *dyaḥ chẽ* residence. The caretakers, *dyaḥ pāḥlā*, of the first category of shrines generally belong to the Maharjan caste. The second category of temples are kept by Dyaḥlā (Pwaḥ) fishermen, one of the lowest caste in the Newar hierarchy. Furthermore, there is an interesting link between the *dhunyā* pole of the farmers' musical ensembles and such quarter-gods. Thus, in Nyeta, the two yak-tails decorating this pole are white since the *twāḥ* is protected by Nyeta Ajimā (=Śveta Kālī), who is white in colour. Similarly, in Watū, both yak-tails are red on account of their links with Bhadrakālī, always represented by the colour red in iconography. And in Wāghaḥ, they are both black, as the quarter is bound to Ākāśa Bhairava.

Each quarter (sometime each neighbourhood) also has its own deified crossroads stones. First, a *chwāsa* where all polluted materials which have entered into contact with excreta from the human body (placenta, menstrual blood, etc) as well as bedding and clothing from a dead person are thrown away. Second, a *kwalāṃ* where leftovers from funeral meals, especially from *ghaḥsū*, are deposited. The *chwāsa* is supposed to be the abode of Chwāsa Ajimā, a very dangerous deity indeed if not invoked appropriately. The kwalāṃ is the seat of a supernatural being of indefinite identity, *Kwalāṃdyaḥ* (Bhairava?). These two inauspicious places are marked on the roadway by small uncarved stones, usually buried partly in the ground. According to Levy (1990: 193), in Bhaktapur, 'The main *chwāsa* are said to protect the entire *twāḥ*.'

Contrary to the situation in Bhaktapur,[36] the paths by which the dead are borne to the proper place of burning do not reflect the boundaries of the present-day quarters. It must be admitted that each *twāḥ* has a prescribed route to its own cremation ground. But this route does not circumambulate the whole quarter. Moreover, on leaving the territory of the *twāḥ*, the 'Path of the Dead' fuses with the road of the adjacent neighbourhood. It is worth nothing that as far as the Maharjan are concerned a person who dies away from his original house not long after having moved out must be carried back to his former home and borne to the

36 Gutschow and Kölver 1975: 27; cf. also Herdick 1987: 237-275.

appropriate cremation ground. However, some years after moving, the farmer will adopt the 'Path of the Dead' of his new quarter.

Although each quarter has its own bounded territory, the dividing lines between territories are extremely difficult to trace. The clumping together of buildings and the internal courtyard structure of the habitat do not make it possible to circumambulate precisely the whole quarter on ritual occasions. The *twāḥ* has its landmarks, its corner boundaries fixed by small streets or lanes, but it definitely lacks fixed limits. As a rule, the boundaries seem to be more mental than physical. They pertain more to symbolic representations and enactments than to concrete daily life. Such a situation may have arisen because the *twāḥ* lost its old administrative function (if it had any). As a matter of fact, as mentioned earlier, the new ward territories of the city differ sharply from the traditional quarters of the city.

Role of the Maharjan within the quarter and the city

The Maharjan play a prominent role in the life of the quarter. In the religious domain, they do not only provide ritual services to high-caste Newars such as Śreṣṭha, Udās, Śākya and Vajrācārya, as we saw, they often minister to the territorial divinities of the locality and always lead the festival processions with their musical instruments. This is especially true during Pāhāṃ Caḥray (Goḍhe Jātrā), when seven Ajimā goddesses are carried through the northern and southern parts of Kathmandu, and during the festival of Pacalī Bhairava, when the pot symbolising the god is borne all around the quarters of the southern part of the city. Without farmers, in fact, no urban ritual could be held in the settlement. By guiding the procession through the narrow lanes of the capital in accordance with time-honoured prescriptions, the Maharjan exert control over the symbolic image of the quarter and of the city as a whole.

Farmers also organise at regular intervals special ceremonial feasts, called *maraḥ jā nakegu* in Newar *(maraḥ* for short), for the children living in the quarter. All the children, regardless of the caste they belong to, are served newly harvested steamed rice (New. *hājā)* and vegetables. This food is cooked by the Maharjan themselves and is distributed in the name of certain deities during festivals such as Pacalī Bhairava Jātrā (Paci maraḥ), Bālā Caḥray (Luti maraḥ) and Pāhāṃ Caḥray. In some cases, as in Nyeta, *maraḥ* food distribution is linked with Ganedyaḥ and/or Lukumāḥdyaḥ, the hidden and carnivorous form of Mahādyaḥ (=Śiva). Such meals stress the unity of the inhabitants of the quarter and clearly

illustrate the crucial role of the Maharjan within it.[37]

The functions of the farmers extend to other areas as well. Most of the '32 *ṭol*' have a kind of local headman, called *nāyaḥ*, who is often Maharjan by caste. Although a new administrative system came into force in 1951-55, this person is still responsible for work undertaken in common at the locality level (road and well repairs, for instance), and is expected to resolve disputes within the quarter.[38] An assistant (New. *māhāṃ* or *mā)* works under his control. The *nāyaḥ*, whose charge goes from father to eldest son, also has some duties pertaining to religious affairs. He often runs the local festivals of Ajimā goddesses or Ganedyaḥ images, keeping the revenue records and supervising the ritual services for which the different Newar castes are responsible.

The Maharjan also have important obligations as far as the whole city is concerned. First, they have to lay narrow temporary bridges over the neighbouring rivers during winter. These planks of wood are placed (New. *tā cuegu)* during the festival of Tihār, on the Newar New Year's day, and are removed (New. *tā ligu)* during Bālā Caḥray (November-Decembẹr). Bridges on the Bagmati river are laid down by farmers of Watū and Taḥnanī *twāḥ*, the ones on the Vishnumati by the farmers of Nyeta and Asā. This custom, which provides easy access to the fields at a time when water is especially cold, is nowadays in decline. Maharjans complain that they no longer receive funds from the municipality to fulfil this function. Secondly, every twelve years the farmers used to clean two of the town's major wells: Japatu, located in the lower part of Kathmandu (in Musum Bāhāḥ), and Pilatū, situated in the upper part (in Asā Kamalāchi Pilatū). The cleaning of these two wells is connected with rituals conducted by Vajrācārya Buddhist priests for rainfall. It is performed either on Sithinakhaḥ (May-June) or on the full moon of Caitra (March-April).

During Indra Jātrā and Janabāhāḥdyaḥ Jātrā (=Seto Matsyendranāth), two major festivals of Kathmandu, the musical ensembles of the different Maharjan quarters join in playing music and in leading processions all over the city. As I have shown elsewhere, Maharjans are intimately associated with Indra (Toffin 1992). According to a local myth, a farmer from Maru captured Indra when the Vedic god was stealing flowers while

37 Other castes, such as Udās, organise such public feasts for the children of the residential area.

38 In some cases, the *ākhāḥ chẽ* serves as a meeting place for such purposes.

disguised in human form. The same is true for Janabāhāḥdyaḥ, a Buddhist deity, discovered in Jamo by a Jamomi Maharjan when cleaning his threshing area near the paddy fields. Down to the present day, a farmer from this locality has a ritual part to play during the annual lustration of the god (Locke 1980: 205-207).

Lastly, we may mention the *bauja hwãghã yā wanigu* (or *hwãghã yāygu)* ritual, which is performed every year on the second and third day of the bright fortnight of Baiśākh (April-May). During these two days, the Maharjan community of Kathmandu offers cooked rice to the evil spirits, *bhūt-pret*. The rice is taken in procession all round the city and is thrown (New. *bau biye)* on the crossroads. The purpose of this ritual is to feed the demons, to invite them (New. *saḥtegu)* for a feast, so that they will not be tempted to steal children and grain in the houses. In this connection, two farmers from every quarter of the upper part of the city gather on the first day in Lagan. The second day, it is the turn of the quarters of the lower part to join up at that place. No *dhimay* drums are played on this occasion. Yet, butchers are called on to play their own single-barrel drum called *nāykhīṃ*. Interestingly enough, this ritual is linked with the Gathāmugaḥ festival (July-August) when evil spirits are expelled from the city. Taken together, these two ceremonies illustrate a marked ambivalence towards evil spirits. Demons are first feasted, then, two months later, chased out of the city. Two opposite attitudes, attraction and repulsion, are here paradoxically combined.

Conclusion

As pointed out by Niels Gutschow, trade obviously played a prominent role in the genesis and growth of Kathmandu. The city has greatly profited from its key location along the Trans-Himalayan road. Since the beginning of the first millennium CE, its rise is linked with large movements of goods and persons from Tibet to India, and vice versa. Mahāyāna Buddhist monasteries also stand as a crucial factor in the development of the urban fabric: up to the present day, these religious centres constitute major landmarks in the symbolism of the city and mirror the overall spatial arrangement of the urban settlement. Yet, our case study clearly reveals that a third element, namely the urban farmers, has to be taken into account when dealing with the history of Kathmandu. Maharjans are an outstanding feature and an integral part of the Newar cityscape. Such a role undoubtedly goes back to the very origins of the town. It is convenient at this point to sum up some of our findings in this respect.

The Maharjan of Kathmandu are closely associated with a cylindrical drum which is one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newar and is supposed not to have been borrowed from outside. It is surely not by accident that this instrument has been chosen by the Maharjan to embody their identity and to strengthen their social organisation. Farmers are also the caretakers (if not the priests) of the main temples of the city. Interestingly enough, among these temples we find deities who, like the god of music, Nāsaḥdyaḥ, belong to the oldest heritage of Newar culture and have been incorporated only later on into the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon. The cult of the Ajimā, perhaps also Ājudyaḥ (with its curious emphasis on beer pots), is instructive in this connection. Besides, the Maharjan are linked with the foundation of some major temples and/or deities of Kathmandu (Janabāhāḥdyaḥ, Indra), and a detailed analysis of Newar royal rituals—beyond the scope of this chapter—would illuminate the relevance of farmers for sacred aspects of kingship. All of this point to remote origins in the Valley's indigenous past for we are, no doubt, dealing with remnants of an old, maybe the most archaic, stratum of Kathmandu. Considering all these factors, we reach the conclusion that the Maharjan are among the oldest dwellers, if not *the* oldest dwellers of the city. Further proof of this can be found in the control that farmers exert over the symbolic space by guiding communal processions within the settlement.[39]

This complex set of ethnographic data corroborates the hypothesis that Kathmandu developed from a number of separate villages which, in time, grew together. Obviously, the present unified structure of the old part of the city is a recent phenomenon. It can be traced back roughly to Ratna Malla, in the 15th century, and to the building of a royal palace in the centre of the city. As stressed by our study, the lower half of Kathmandu still has its own fabric, its own temples (Pacalī, Bhindyaḥ), and its own religious practices differing slightly from those of the upper half. It constitutes a world unto itself. There is good reason to believe that this area was incorporated into the city proper at a later stage.

Kathmandu, or more properly traditional Kathmandu, can therefore be categorised as a 'rural city' or an 'agro-town'.[40] Although confronting the ways and means of 20th-century modernity, the city preserves some traces of its (at least partly) rural origins. In addition, the capital of

39 See also Chapter 12 on this topic.

40 This is less and less the case today, even in the old parts of the city. Kathmandu is presently becoming a modern town, not fundamentaly different from other South Asian capitals.

Nepal is also categorised by the persistence of family structures pertaining to the village landscape. As indicated, the lineage still forms an important locus of identification for the urban Maharjan and is still associated with important ceremonies. Recent ethnographic evidence shows that the same situation is at work in other Newar towns and among other Newar urban castes.[41] As a matter of fact, there is no sharp difference between the urban and rural social structures within Newar civilisation. We must admit that cities are much more multi-caste in nature and express the fullest development of the caste system under the direction of a king. But as far as the internal structure of the caste is concerned, the continuum is noteworthy. Urban and village studies point to the same basic social determinants: hierarchical order based on pure and impure, the seniority principle, the paramount importance of the *guthi* association system, shallowness of kinship units, closeness of residence units, particular relevance of territorial and blood-drinking deities, etc. In both worlds, the system within which the activity occurs and which makes it meaningful is a religious system. Even the architecture and habitat are almost identical. They are clearly organised in both types of settlements by a similar network of nodes, with religious buildings playing a primary role.

Nevertheless, there is a notable difference between the Maharjan from Kathmandu and from the village. One of the most striking features of the social organisation of Kathmandu's farmers is the rigid insistence on exogamy at the Quarter level. Now, the opposite is true in rural areas. As a rule, the Newar Maharjan village (which often has the same number of inhabitants as the urban *twāḥ*) is mostly endogamous. Sometimes, such endogamy is reinforced by strict regulations (Chapter 4). It is consequently inaccurate to speak of a 'village in the city'. Sociologically, the two residence units operate along different lines. What happens in Kathmandu is that the territorially-based Quarters are endowed with marital functions (exogamy) to the detriment of kinship groups. The consanguineal bond does not disappear but is more or less swallowed by the territorial unit. In other words, the farmer's Quarter within the city is not like an isolated cell, secluded from the outside. It is outwardly-oriented. Emphasis is on links with the other Maharjan *twāḥ* of the city.

The remarkable thing is that such a pattern is restricted to Kathmandu.

41 For Kathmandu, see Lewis 1981 and Pradhan 1986; for Bhaktapur cf. Levy 1990; and for Lalitpur cf. Gellner 1987.

In Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, the two other large Newar towns, the Maharjan belonging to one quarter do not form an exogamous unit: they can marry among themselves provided no consanguineal ties can be traced. The endogamous/exogamous opposition does not therefore coincide with the village/city dichotomy. The peculiar situation prevailing in Kathmandu may perhaps be explained by the modest size of its Maharjan community compared with the whole city population. What I am suggesting here is that this group opted for such a complex system, with corresponding exogamy, to retain and strengthen its internal unity within an urban settlement where it was becoming more and more of a minority. In danger of being absorbed or totally dominated by other castes, farmers enacted exogamous regulations, establishing an active network among the '32 *twāḥ*' of the city. No one can doubt that the present vitality of the Maharjan community springs from this arrangement.

It is also possible that this territorial organisation has been influenced by the Newar Buddhist monastery structure. As a matter of fact, the Maharjan *twāḥ* presents striking similarities to the Buddhist *bāhāḥ* of Newar towns. Every Śākya and Vajrācārya must be a member of a monastic community based on a monastery, as every Maharjan must belong to a Quarter social grouping. In both cases, membership is hereditary. Moreover, as suggested by David Gellner (1987: 396), the principle of seniority, so important among Newars, has perhaps to do with Buddhism: 'The rule of seniority as the only hierarchical principle lies at the very basis of Buddhist monastic organisation as described in the Vinaya texts which date from a hundred years after the Buddha's death.' We may add that the *waḥlāḥ cwanegu* collective initiation, celebrated under the control of Vajrācārya priests, seems more or less to be copied from the Buddhist monastery initiation. It is a hypothesis worth considering that the pervasiveness of the *guthi* organisation among the Maharjan owes something to the importance of Buddhism in their history. However, this possible influence does not explain the exogamy of the farmers' Quarters; to my knowledge, the *bāhāḥ* social grouping does not constitute an exogamous unit (Gellner 1987: 378).

In a challenging article, David F. Pocock (1960: 63-81) rightly outlined the fact that in many cities of North India there prevails an exclusive caste or kinship system of which the original is still to be seen in the villages. This homology extends to the political field as well: the role of the king in the city for instance is played by the dominant caste in the village. As Pocock (1960: 81) puts it, 'the sociology of India's urban

and rural population may not be divided between urban and rural sociologies'. The city and the villages are elements of one and the same culture. By all these aspects, Newar civilisation clearly belongs to South Asia. It is impossible to draw a sharp line between the villages and the towns of Kathmandu Valley as far as the social and religious structure is concerned.

However, a further implication of this chapter is that a tribal substratum is much more present in the Newar cities than in India. It is true that this substratum has been reformulated over the centuries in Hindu or Buddhist terms. But as suggested, one of the main pillars of Kathmandu obviously derives from an old autochthonous element, which was, once upon a time, outside the pale of Hinduism and which preserves some native features down to the present day. To my knowledge, tribal groups did not play such a role in the expansion of Indian cities. In sum, among the Newar, there is not a clear distinction between the so-called High Tradition and 'Folk' Tradition: both heritages coexist in the same urban settlement and have long interacted. This 'tribal' outline of the city is one of the most salient characteristics of Kathmandu Valley civilisation—without parallel on the subcontinent. In this respect, the understanding of Newar cities is of primary importance for the study of urban spaces in South Asia.

4

A Secret Village

Social control and religion among the Swãgumi

Over the years the status of the village in South Asia has become an increasingly problematic topic for anthropological interpretation. Reacting against certain 19th-century English authors—H. Maine and B.H. Baden Powell, among them—who saw in India the juxtaposition of small, self-sufficient village units possessing autonomous power structures, Louis Dumont (1980) showed that the hierarchical principle of the caste system took precedence over territorial factors in the subcontinent. In his view, the consensual solidarity at the village level that had been alleged has little weight against the absolute control exercised by the dominant caste over the local population, and against the relationships of dependence formed between the groups of a social space that is highly compartmentalised. This demystification of the village as a sociological unit was received with reservation and some contention (Srinivas 1975). But today no one accepts the notion of autonomous, self-sufficient peasant communities; Indian villages have long been linked to broader, regional political and religious networks that

First published in French in *De village en village. Espaces communautaires et dévelopement*, Cahiers de l'IUED, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris and Geneva, 1992, and in English in *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, Royal Nepal Academy, 1996, no. 1, vol. 1, pp. 1-32. This translation has been revised by the author, and corrected and updated in several places. I must thank Vishnu and Mahila Maharjan for their help in the field.

incorporate them and interfere in their functioning.

The tribal villages of South Asia, at least those located on the fringes of Brahmanical centres, correspond to a different model. Their morphology is based less on links of dependence than on multifunctional kinship groups that regulate matrimonial exchanges, access to land, and religious activities. The importance of such kinship units gives these villages a segmented nature. Internal hierarchy here cannot be explained entirely by caste rules. Rather, it rests on age and on segmentation within the lineages or clans. Notwithstanding the diversity of such tribal communities, it could be argued that they have firmer boundaries than do Hindu ones. The line of demarcation between locals and 'others' is more rigid, and the locality tends to function as a world of its own, a 'total' society. At the religious level, village solidarity sometimes expresses itself in the cult of a communal deity who protects the local territory (Chapter 6).

Pyangaon (New. Swāgu), in the district of Lalitpur, is the Newar village in Kathmandu Valley whose social and religious life we intend to study here. It belongs undoubtedly to the second, 'tribal' model. It is a rather homogeneous village, inward-oriented and almost completely endogamous. Admittedly, the inhabitants, who call themselves Swāgumi, from the Newar name of the locality, live in a Hindu social environment divided into castes, and call upon the services of castes external to the village for their domestic rituals (Chapter 5). But their internal social organisation is not rooted in a hierarchical opposition of pure and impure. It rests, rather, on a very cohesive lineage structure. The lineage here is the fundamental sociological unit, the basic molecule of this micro-society. Furthermore, the members of this village were until recently completely illiterate. Even the local ritual specialists still do not possess written texts and learn their secret rites from Brāhmaṇ or other Tantric priests who live outside the community.

Within Newar society and culture overall, Pyangaon is the embodiment of an archaic, 'tribal' pole. This stands in opposition to the Hindu social world, which is most fully developed in the towns of Kathmandu Valley and which is principally embodied by the Kṣatriya castes. As I have stressed elsewhere, Newar civilisation is based on a synthesis between populations that arrived here in ancient times from the south (present-day India) and migrations from the north or the east, probably from those regions that are today the borderlands between China, Burma and Tibet. Newars took from classical India the fundamental elements of

their culture: writing, religions (Hinduism and Buddhism), the concept of kingship, and more. Yet, in some places one may discern an old tribal heritage behind such non-indigenous institutions. Although not completely absent in the towns, especially in their more rural quarters, this 'indigenous' background seems to be best preserved in villages populated by agricultural castes.

The texts I have already written about Pyangaon (mainly Toffin 1977, 1984) were based on my successive series of fieldworks in this small peasant community between 1970 and 1973. Among other things, I described in these previous publications the difficulties I had in gaining acceptance from the inhabitants and in obtaining information from them about their social and religious life. Pyangaon is indeed a secretive and introverted village. It is reluctant to admit a stranger into its internal world; if it accepts him, it obliges him to conform to its ways. The very identity of the community seems to rest on a strategy of silence and occultation towards any person from the outside. In 1988, nearly 20 years after my first contact, I had the opportunity to return to this remote settlement. I was welcomed by educated young people, who were eager to open their village to the outside world. They revealed certain facts that had until then been concealed from me. The present study is based on this new material. Obviously, Pyangaon has not disclosed all its secrets. Nevertheless, the interest raised among Nepalogists by the structure of this village—which, all in all, is highly original—has led me to publish the results of this recent investigation.

This revised study also intends to insist, more than my previous work has done, on the social functions of beliefs and rituals. I would like to show how, in Pyangaon, the various gods of the village relate to the concrete functioning of familial and lineage structures. This approach does not aim to entirely reduce the sacred to the social. I am aware that the local magico-religious system—which, upon first analysis, is a form of popular Hinduism—provides the local peasant with a better understanding of the universe, helping him to find his way in life and to lessen the individual and collective threats (for instance, sickness and drought) that constantly burden him. Nevertheless, it remains the case that familial relationships are essentially defined in symbolic terms, and that the cult of the gods is an integral part of the lineage politics and power network of the village. Is there really any mutual exclusion between these two points of view? We may doubt it: the religious world of these Newar agriculturalists does not apparently dissoci-

ate the order of representation from the order of praxis.

I also visited this settlement very recently (in 2004 and 2005) and was struck by the important changes that had taken place in many sectors of village life. Obviously, my observations regarding the transformations this tiny territory has undergone over the past 30 years might throw some light on the tremendous changes that have occurred in the rural areas of the Kathmandu Valley as a whole since 1961. But, first of all, it is necessary to set the village community (rarely has the word 'community', in its full sense, been more pertinent) in its various contexts.

The cultural geography of the village

Like all Newar settlements, Pyangaon is a concentrated and compact locality. In 1970, the village consisted of 76 houses, attached to each other and lined up along a single street, such that the two rows of buildings stood face to face. Tusal, a hamlet consisting of seven dwellings socially attached to Pyangaon, is situated about 200 metres to the north-west of the village. Between the village proper and Tusal is a muddy pond in which buffaloes bathe and women occasionally wash clothes. Next to this and to the west is a vast area set apart for the drying and threshing of grain (Fig. 6). The street—about 200 metres long—that runs through the town is oriented south-east to north-west, though the villagers think of it as running from east to west.

Pyangaon's houses are built of brick in the usual Newar manner, and have two to three storeys. It is forbidden (New. *majyū)* to have terraces (New. *kaḥsi)* on the roofs, for this would irritate, it is said, the god Śiva.[1] Since 1972, the locality has grown mainly in a north-westerly direction, around the area used to dry and winnow cereals and along the road leading further south to the temple of Ṭikā Bhairava. Some fifteen houses have been built in this area (1988). These buildings are of modern construction, especially the most recent ones. They have no common walls, are plastered with cement, and their roofs are often flat. In 1971, Pyangaon was home to 517 villagers distributed among 81 households. In 1988, its population had risen to about 760. In 2001, that number had reached about 930, and the number of separate families about 110.

The old village of Pyangaon is divided into two parts: an 'upper' part,

1 According to a local story, one day the god Śiva was playing with his wife Pārvatī. Pārvatī found such a good hiding place in Pyangaon that her husband could not find her, 'even looking down from the sky'. The prohibition, in fact, seems more for Pārvatī's convenience than for Śiva's.

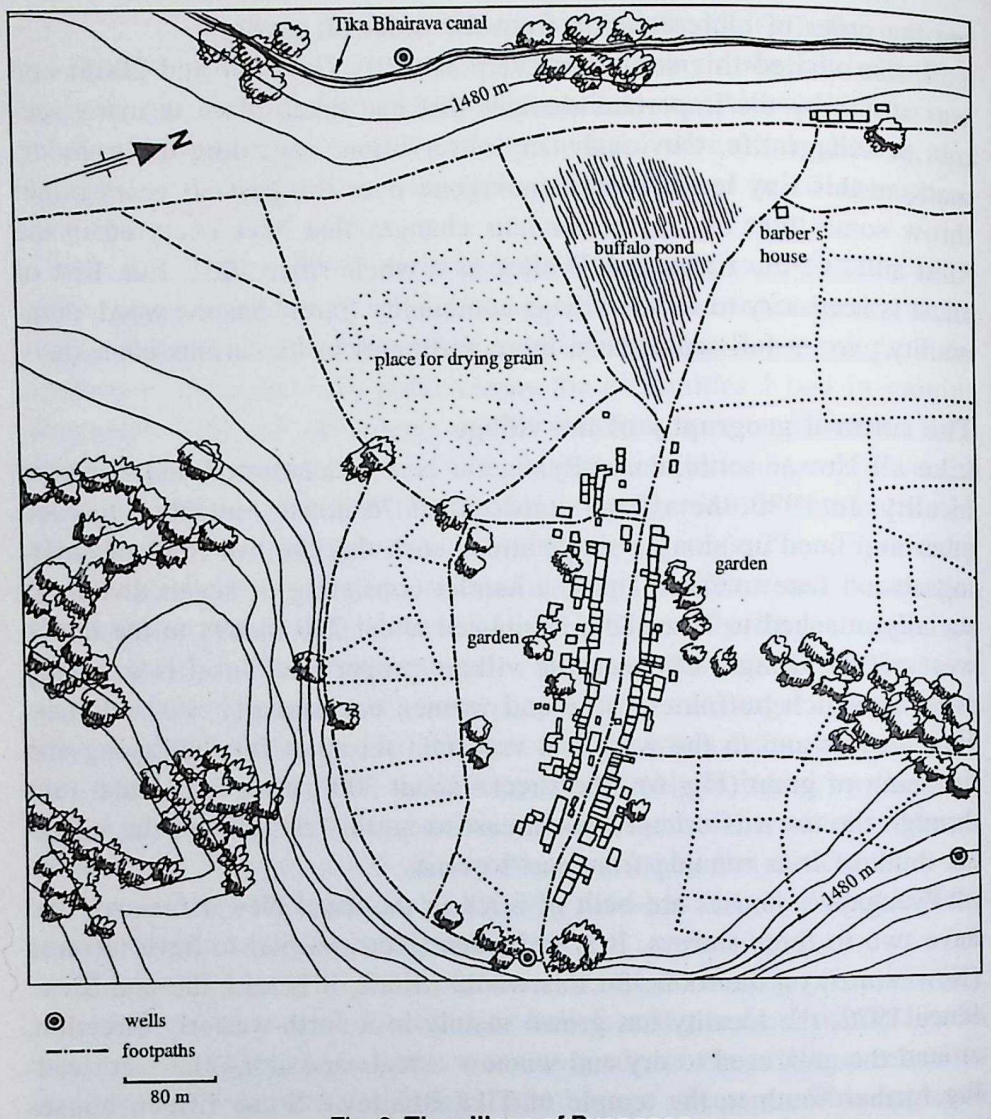


Fig. 6. **The village of Pyangaon**

thaḥne, which comprises the row of houses to the south, and a 'lower' part, *kwaḥne*, consisting of the other row of buildings. This division, characteristic of Newar settlements, corresponds to the orientation of the nearest river, the Nakhu Khusi, which runs from south to north, as do most streams in southern Kathmandu Valley. The 'upper' part thus corresponds to upstream, and the 'lower' part to downstream. The two moieties of the village are constructed on the same topographical level.

With the exception of a small store where one could drink tea and buy cigarettes, Pyangaon had no shops in 1971. Wares such as cloth,

spices and salt were bought in the neighbouring town of Chapagaon (New. Wā), two kilometres away to the north. Three decades later, in 2003, four grocery stores (Nep. *kirānā pasal)* were operating in the locality. When it was first established in 1961-62, the primary school (Nep. *prāthamik pāṭhśālā)* was placed at the point of entry to the village in the communal house of the headmen of the lineages *(guthi chẽ).* In 1984, it was moved to a building erected for the purpose near the open area used for drying grain. The new schoolhouse, built in large part with a grant from a Canadian aid agency, is very basic and lacks teaching equipment. It is attended not only by the children of Pyangaon, but also by those from neighbouring villages populated mainly by high-caste Hindu Indo-Nepali Khaym (or Parbatiyā) castes.

Pyangaon was electrified in 1972-73, during the time of my fieldwork. Its supply of water has been greatly facilitated by the construction in 1981 of two tapstands, one at each end of the street. Thanks to these, women, for the most part, no longer have to fetch water from outside the village. However, Pyangaon still does not possess any underground drainage system. Household refuse is thrown onto the street or dumped in gardens behind the houses; once there, it is soon visited upon by such public garbage collectors as birds and dogs. In 1972, the village had no latrines, either public or private, apart from the one next to the new school building. People relieved themselves in the gardens and fields around the village. The main village street, paved with bricks and stones, is not and was never open to motor traffic. There are six public shelters (New. *phalcā)* on the sides of this street, each with a row of pillars on the side that is open to it and a wall at the back, where men gather to play cards or smoke their water-pipes. These small rest houses also have important ritual functions: during festivals, this is where the statue of the tutelary deity is displayed and sacred music is performed.

The most important religious monuments are two Tantric—or 'Āgamic' of the *āgā chẽ* (New. 'house of Āgā deities') variety—esoteric sanctuaries. They are dedicated to Kāleśvar Mahādev, a form of Śiva. These temples, which are scarcely distinguishable from the ordinary houses, are situated at the two ends of the village on the 'upper' row. Through labour and funds contributed from each household, the villagers renovated the temples in 2001-2002. Some money also came from the district government and the Village Development Committee (VDC). As we shall see later, these religious buildings are at the focal point of Pyangaon's socio-religious life, and are the primary integrating force in

the community. We must also mention two shrines, one devoted to Ganedyaḥ (Gaṇeśa), and the other to Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the Newar god of dance and music. There is also a small caitya *(cībhāḥ* or, locally, *bhagwān yā thāy)* built by the 'Buddhist' minority of the village in 1961. At festivals and collective ceremonies, the *thakāli* elders visit (New. *cāḥ hilegu)* all these sacred sites. Before each of them, they play on musical instruments a special invocation (New. *dyaḥ lhāykegu)* to the god of music. These processions, which always follow the same route, sanctify the village territory, protecting it against the outside world, perceived as dangerous and threatening.

The symbolic boundaries of Pyangaon are clearly defined. At its extremities lie ritual refuse sites where polluting materials, substances considered impure, and remains of ceremonial feasts are thrown away. A stone called *chwāsa* marks this site at the north-west end of town, at the crossroads of two small paths. To the south-east, the refuse site consists of a small, unmarked area called *kālko* (or *kālka).*[2] At the former, the villagers dispose of the clothes of the deceased on the occasion of a death, and of the placenta and umbilical cord after a baby has been born. At the latter, they discard the dangerous remains of funeral feasts (New. *ghāsā bhway),*[3] offered to the evil spirits called *bhūt.* These cult sites protect the villagers against various external dangers, especially epidemics. Two collective rituals of expulsion take place at these sites, which are haunted by evil spirits and deities of ambiguous nature: on Gathāmugaḥ, in the dark fortnight of Śrāvaṇ (July-August), and on Bās Caḥray, in the dark fortnight of Caitra (March-April). On these two occasions, flaming torches representing malefic spirits are thrown out at the two ends of the village (New. *pulpul shay wāyegu).* The inhabitants of the western part of Pyangaon dispose of their torches at the *chwāsa,* while those of the eastern part do so at the *kālko.* These seasonal apotropaic rituals are associated with the cult of the local deity Kāleśvar Mahādev.

The boundary between the two parts of the village passes through an uncarved stone placed at the heart of the settlement. This stone, which symbolises Chetrapāl (Skt. Kṣetrapāla, a form of Bhairava) is the ritual

2 This may be a dialectal variant of the word *kālā,* which T. Manandhar (1986: 29) translates as 'crossroad'. For an account of the ritual role of this place of refuse among the upper Hindu Newar castes, cf. Toffin (1984: 411, 577).

3 *Ghāsā,* a local pronunciation of *ghasū* (or *ghaḥsū*) (New.): 'The purificatory rites of a household on the twelfth day after a death' (T. Manandhar 1986: 53).

centre of Pyangaon (Fig. 2). Just beside it, a spot called *dabū* (New.) or 'platform' (there is in fact no elevated structure at that place), is reserved for the ritual dances and theatrical plays performed during the main communal festival (Toffin 1984: 89-100).

A prosperous and diversified rural economy

Pyangaon's economy is based primarily on agriculture and animal husbandry. The fields are hoe-ploughed, except for some portions of non-irrigated areas where an ard drawn by oxen is occasionally used. The inhabitants of Pyangaon cultivate rice (both irrigated and dry varieties), wheat, maize, mustard, finger-millet, potatoes, various vegetables—cauliflower and radish, among them—and a range of pulses such as soybeans, beans and lentils. Irrigated rice is the most important cereal crop, as it constitutes the villagers' staple food. Because of its multiple uses (it may be consumed flattened, boiled, or as rice-beer), the *taichini* variety is preferred. These grains can be eaten in all circumstances, even if somebody in the family is polluted. It is not a refined variety, but a tasty and a robust one, and resistant to insects and diseases, according to the Swãgumi. Old, indigenous breeds of rice, such as *tauli* (New. *puwā)*, which were well adapted to the local climate, are presently dying out.

Non-irrigated areas (Nep. *pākho)* constitute 35 per cent of the cultivated grounds, a high proportion for a Newar settlement in the Kathmandu Valley. Furthermore, the diet of the Pyangaon peasant includes more porridge of corn and finger-millet—dry crops—than that of the average Newar farmer. Swãgumis are thus not only rice-eaters like all other Jyāpu agriculturists, but also eaters of *dhīro*, a food associated with many hill ethnic groups. Thanks to the introduction of improved seeds from 1967 onwards and to the intensive use of chemical fertiliser, productivity has increased considerably: since 1970, yields of more than 5,500 kg of rice from the irrigated fields and 3,200 kg of wheat per hectare are frequent. However, since the 1990s, there has been a significant drop in overall production due to the overuse of land and the subsequent impoverishment of the soil. About a quarter of all agricultural output is exported to the Valley's cities—especially to Lalitpur, where the farmers of Pyangaon have their own certified grain merchants.

Buffalo farming also plays a crucial role in the economic life of the village. Most families own one or two she-buffaloes, which they keep on the ground floors of their houses or in special sheds with thatched roofs just behind. During the rainy season *(barkhā)*, the animals yield up to

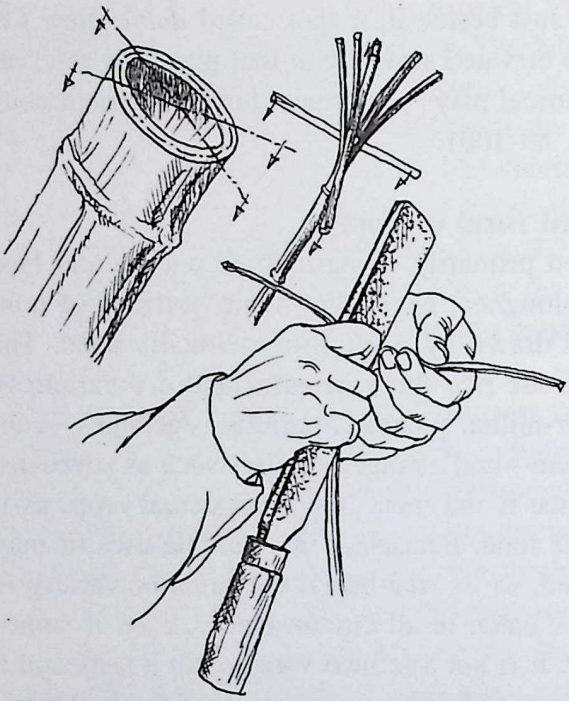


Fig. 7. **Basketry work with the *cupi* knife (drawing by Vincent Barré, 1975)**

five litres of milk per day, sometimes more. The milk is sold either in Chapagaon or at a dairy established in Tusal, just next to the village, in 1978. Formerly, it was sold directly as far as the Soaltee Hotel in Tahachal in Kathmandu city. Very few cows are bred in the locality. Pig-raising is forbidden due to the impurity of this animal.

In the agricultural off-season, from December to April, the men of Pyangaon have the habit of working on various building sites in the Kathmandu Valley. They would and continue to work as carpenters and brick-makers. Sometimes they take their wives and small children with them when they leave home for work. Until fairly recently, the villagers also made the bamboo boxes called *pyāṅg* (New. *dyāṃ* or *dyāhāṃ)*, which traditionally served to measure grain. The very Nepali name of the settlement comes from this word. Boxes measuring one *pāthī* (8 *mānā*[4]) were favoured. Bamboo was cut far away, in Chitwan District, during winter. According to custom, bamboo cutting would start on the full moon of the month of Māgh and end on the full moon of Phālgun. Only the inner layer of the bark (New. *hapā)* was processed. The *cupi* (New.), the knife used for this job, was worshipped and offered a rooster at the beginning and at the end of the period. This instrument is said to embody the god Bhimsen (or Bhīmasena), and it is in his name that the *pūjā* takes place. While in the forest, the men wore special shoes, called *pā lākhāṃ*, made of rice straw. The *pyāṅg* were bartered against grain in the various settlements of the Valley.[5] This craft has been in decline since 1960, when government

4 One *mana* = 570 cm^3.

5 The rate was one *pāthi* measure box against one *pāthi* grain.

authorities prohibited the cutting of bamboo in the areas once exploited by the Swãgumi. In 1988, only a few men were still making these measuring boxes. At that time, production was mainly for sale to tourists, at best for export to Japan. In 2005, nobody except one old man was still able to make *pyāṅg*. The branch of the *Jyāpu Mahāguthi* association (Chapter 12), established here in 2001, was looking for a way to revive the activity so central to the identity of the village.

In comparison to neighbouring peasant communities, whether Newar or Nepali-speaking Bāhun-Chetrī (Parbatiyā), Pyangaon is a relatively wealthy village. Admittedly, the Swãgumi are well known in the vicinity to be intense, hard workers and to buy as few products from outside the village as possible. But all the peasants of this settlement also possess at least some tiny strips of land in both irrigated and dry-farming areas. Basing her calculations on the official cadastral survey, some years ago a German geographer calculated that Swãgumi land-owners possessed on average 6.1 *ropani* (one *ropani* is one-twentieth of a hectare) (Müller 1986: 148). My own data, obtained directly from interviews, indicates a slightly higher average: between eight and ten *ropani*.[6] The fields are sometimes very far from the village itself. The ones situated near Godavari are reached after an hour and a half's walk along small paths.

Some families are clearly richer than others: nine per cent of farm households have between fifteen and 20 *ropani*, while 4.5 per cent have less than one *ropani* (Müller 1984: 96). In 1987, the family of Vishnu Bahadur, with whom I lived for a long time, held 21 *ropani* of irrigated land and 15 *ropani* of dry land, which totals nearly two hectares. This is one of the largest holdings in Pyangaon. The richest family is one from the Ācāḥ maximal lineage (a maximal lineage being a lineage with greater genealogical depth than usual) that owns 40 *ropani* of irrigated land.

The majority of farmers cultivate their own land. However, 22 per cent of the land-owners also work as tenant-farmers for some Śreṣṭha merchants in Chapagaon. Another group (20 per cent) lease a part of their land to Bāhun-Chetrī or Tamang tenant-farmers in the vicinity.[7] This process is called *jyākigu* in Newar. For the transplantation of rice seedlings and for rice harvesting, richer farmers hire Tamang or Sārkī and Damāī (low Parbatiyā castes) day labourers. But, as with Jyāpu peas-

6 Cf. Toffin (1984: 70). To meet its annual food requirements, a family of seven must own a quarter of a hectare of irrigated land.

7 Toffin (1984: 70). These figures are roughly similar to those cited by Müller (1986: 148).

ants living in the old urban centres, agricultural labour is essentially obtained through a system of mutual aid (New. *bwalā-jyā*) within the community. Plots of land in the non-irrigated zones are highly fragmented and widely dispersed. Some fields are located as far away as Campi, on the other side of the Bagmati river, six kilometres away.

Between 1972 and 1988, the income from the sale of surplus grain was used principally for the construction of houses along the road leading to Chapagaon. Most of these buildings are rented to Parbatiyā families working in the vicinity. Some Swãgumi also purchased irrigated plots, rarely more than two or three *ropani*, from people extraneous to the village. The price of a narrow piece of land tripled from 1971 to 1988: in 1988 an irrigated plot of one *ropani* cost between 25,000 and 30,000 Nepali rupees. In 2005, the value of the same plot amounted to between one and two *lākh* rupees. The same year, an *ānā* of land (one sixteenth of a *ropani)* at the entrance of Pyangaon, along the main road leading to Chapagaon or Tika Bhairava, cost around 80,000 rupees.

In 1973, an oil-press was set up by a villager (a Jyāpu outsider, in fact). But this venture was a failure: the press collapsed in 1975 and has not been replaced. Some new economic activities have appeared though. During the 1980s, some people set up poultry farms in their homes. The chickens, of foreign breed, were raised exclusively for the market. Nowadays, ducks are preferred to fowls, which have suffered a lot from recent diseases. In 1984, a Sherpa wool product contractor opened a shop at Taukhel, 500 metres south of the village. The women of Pyangaon still buy raw wool there, which they comb, spin and knit with needles. The knitted products (socks, sweaters) are sold to Sherpa wholesalers. This cottage industry has provided peasant women with a new means of income.

Among other economic developments, mention should be made of the establishment not far from Pyangaon of some small stone-crushing businesses. In 1988, eight villagers were employed in these workshops. The refined gravel produced here is used for road construction. It is carried by truck to the cities. Road traffic between Lele and Lalitpur has grown considerably over the last three decades. Although the villagers do not complain about it, the constant coming and going of the trucks, raising thick clouds of diesel and dust, is a source of environmental pollution. Most of the people living in this area are in favour of the creation of a second, larger Ring Road encircling the first one. This new highway would pass between Chapagaon and the village of Theco.

Disputed origins, contested status

With the exception of one barber (Nau) family living outside the village proper, at some 50 meters from the nucleus of the settlement, Pyangaon is a single-caste community. Its inhabitants describe themselves as Jyāpu, the farmer caste that represented, in 1965, more than 40 per cent of the Newar population of the Kathmandu Valley, or as Maharjan, the honorific term proper to this caste. In the 1970s, all the local women dressed in the traditional black, red-bordered Jyāpu wraparound (New. *hāku parsi* or *hāku patāsi)*, tied at the waist with a long and wide white piece of cotton cloth. Such clothing was typical of Newar women of the Jyāpu caste all over the Valley, at least until recently. The women of Pyangaon also wear the most common Jyāpu ornaments, especially the *mākaḥsi* gilded earrings in conic form, worn after marriage. Their habitat and houses, too, are similar in nearly all aspects to those of the other Newar agriculturists from the south of the Kathmandu Valley.

The Newar peasants from neighbouring communities, however, do not concede them the status of being Jyāpu like themselves. They hold that the inhabitants of Pyangaon form a caste apart (Nep. and New. *jāt)*, of a lower rank, designated either by the word Gāma (or Gāmo) or by the colloquial expression Swãgumi, 'the inhabitants of Swãgu', the Newar name for the village. (Swãgumi is also, as we saw above, the name by which the villagers of Pyangaon refer to themselves.) They refuse to share cooked rice or to intermarry with them. In their opinion, the Swãgumi are backward, a kind of primitive people, *jaṅgali*. They also maintain that they are newcomers to the Kathmandu Valley, and have only recently become Newar. They add, quoting a myth from the village itself (see below), that these people are descended from an inter-ethnic union between a Newar king and a Tamang (Seṃ) woman, the Tamang being a Tibeto-Burman hill ethnic group. Such an origin would relegate them to a distinctly inferior social status.

Although the Swãgumi recognise that they came from elsewhere, they categorically reject these allegations. According to them, the semi-royal descent credited to them by the legend of their village's foundation clearly supports their higher rank. This is why they, too, will not share cooked food with the neighbouring Jyāpu or allow marriages with non-Swãgumi. This complicated situation creates an almost total matrimonial isolation of the village. Pyangaon is compelled to endogamy from both within and without; it constitutes a sub-caste in its own right.

New material compiled in 1988 provides a better understanding of

the origin of this local sub-caste. Its ancestors are said to come from a village called Pulã Sankhu, or Sankhu (which allegedly became Sãngu, then Swãgu), situated a day and a half's walk south of Pyangaon, outside the Kathmandu Valley but still in the district of Lalitpur. One day, the story goes, some families from this village came to offer sacrifices at Dakhinkali (Dakṣinkālī), a Hindu temple dedicated to the 'Kālī of the South', to the southwest of the Valley. The Newar king reigning at that time (Jayasthiti Malla, according to some), was hunting in the vicinity. He noticed a young woman in the group from Pulã Sankhu, took her as his concubine, and made her pregnant. As compensation, he gave her some land at a place called Dugu (Duku?), between Dakhinkali and the site of Pyangaon. The young woman's parents settled there, but water supply soon became a crucial problem, and the group dispersed in three directions. The largest contingent founded Pyangaon; another settled in the Chitlang Valley, to the south of the Kathmandu basin; and the last established its base near Pharping, not far from Dakhinkali.

Who were these ancestors? They might very possibly have been Gãma, a sub-caste associated today with the Balãmi, another group whose origins are obscure (Chapter 7). Although the Balãmi are close to the Newar, they are distinct from them in a number of respects. The Balãmi are concentrated to the south-west and north-west of the Valley. Some sections of this group are the descendants of mixed marriages of Newars with Tamangs and Parbatiyãs. Like the inhabitants of Pyangaon, the Balãmi also claim royal descent (Chapter 7).

In all probability, the Swãgumi are thus related to such small, marginal groups as the Balãmi, the Gãma, and no doubt also the Pahari and the Putuwãr, who nowadays live on the edge of the Kathmandu basin, near areas covered by forests.[8] These peripheral populations have specific cultural characteristics and speak Newar dialects that a Newar from Kathmandu or Lalitpur would have difficulty understanding. As they settled in Pyangaon, the Swãgumi probably adopted a Jyãpu life-style and became Newarised. Their contacts with other, collateral branches of the Gãma dwindled quickly; when their Chitlang cousins proposed—after a long interruption—to intermarry with them in 1950, they refused

8 Examples of such links are numerous. B.H. Hodgson considered the Gãma an offshoot group of Pahari (K.P. Chattopadhyay 1980: 99). According to G.S. Nepali (1965: 174), Swãgumi ("Swan-gami") are nothing more than Balãmi. In Pharping, the Gãma themselves are occasionally called Sãno Balãmi and one of the seven clans of the Balãmi of that region is called Swãgumi (See Chapter 7).

outright. However, up until 1960, some Gāma from the south-west of the Valley were paying regular visits to worship one of Pyangaon's lineage divinities *(digudyaḥ)* on Thīlā Punhī, the full moon of the month of Mārga (November-December). These trips have now stopped; the Swāgumis have no contact with these distant relatives and deny all affiliation with them.

Further evidence of close connections between the Swāgumi (or Gāmo) of Pyangaon and the Balāmi group can be found in their common worship of the deity Cundyaḥ (or Cun Devī). For Parbatiyā Hindu castes and Newars of the southern part of Kathmandu Valley, Cun Devī is a supernatural being to whom *pūjā* is offered in case of cattle disease and at the time of a pregnant she-buffalo's delivery. In Pyangaon, this god is associated with the cult of the *digudyaḥ* lineage deity. She is represented by an uncarved stone located not far from the field where the four Hindu descent groups of the village used to gather once a year, during Śrī Pañcamī (the fifth day of Māgh, during the bright fortnight), to worship their lineage deities. Cundyaḥ is propitiated, in fact, two days after Śrī Pañcamī by the members of these lineages; a goat is sacrificed to her. As we will see later on (Chapter 7), this peculiar deity is also of great significance to the Balāmi.

As I have shown elsewhere (Toffin 1984), the Swāgumi have preserved a set of customs which are specific to them.[9] They too have their own dialect,[10] unknown elsewhere—even to the Gāma of Chitlang, who nowadays speak Nepali more than Newar. The use of this dialect, unintelligible to anyone not born in Pyangaon, does much to reinforce the village's sense of unity and emphasises the isolation of the Swāgumi. Like the dialect of Dolakha (a small Newar hill town to the east of the Kathmandu Valley, near the Bhote Kosi river) which, it is alleged, the god Bhimsen spoke, the 'patois' of Pyangaon has divine connotations: Śiva, it is said, speaks this strange language when he takes cannabis *(gāṃjā)* and drinks snake-venom. Such linguistic features are divine, but they are also secret: no foreigner must know of them, at the risk of instant death. The survival of this dialect within such a small circle of speakers is a particularly obvious sign of the introversion of this village. The

9 The Swāgumi, for instance, do not celebrate *bhāi ṭikā* (New. *kijā pūjā)* during the Tihār festival. Besides, they do not perform the *ihi* ceremony for young girls nor the *burā jākwa* for old persons as most of the Newars do.

10 It is now possible to consult a short academic study, written in Nepali by T. Simha (1984), on the Newar dialect of Pyangaon.

language enables group secrets to be kept when faced with strangers.

Social structure: Territorial endogamy and lineage exogamy

The population of Pyangaon is divided into five patrilineal maximal lineages called *gwohã* in the local dialect, but also more generally *guthi* (or *gu)*. This confusion between kinship units and religious associations, normally optional in character, is quite interesting. We will come back to it recurrently in this book, especially in Chapter 9. These five groups are themselves subdivided into patrilines known by the expression *phuki khalaḥ*, from *phuki*, meaning agnates, and *khalaḥ*, group. The first four maximal lineages, the Ācāḥ (consisting of 30 households), the Bu (40 households), the Tahā (or Tā) (15) and the Parba (11), derive from the descendants of Pulã Sankhu and call upon Brāhmaṇs (New. Barmhū) to officiate at their funeral rites, especially the *śrāddha* (Nep.). The fifth kin group is called Wosikār (7 households); originally from Makal Kuca, a village near Pulã Sankhu, its ancestors eventually came to settle in Pyangaon and its members employ Gubhāju (Vajrācārya) Buddhist priests for their funeral ceremonies.[11] It is said that, originally, the Wosikār made brooms, widely used to sweep the house and sweep up the grain on the threshing-floor, and sold them within the Kathmandu Valley. There is no ban on marriage between this *buddhamārgi* group and the four 'Hindu' descent groups. Although there is no real hierarchy amongst the maximal lineages, the Ācāḥ hold a certain primacy in ritual life, notably in matters concerning the cult of the tutelary deity of the village.

The choice of a marriage partner follows two principal rules: territorial endogamy and lineage exogamy. The prohibition on marriage outside the village is respected nearly 90 per cent of the time. This endogamy apparently does not threaten reproduction within the community, at least not today. It is known that demographic isolation is possible for a group of around five hundred individuals upward. This is the threshold beyond which the existence of equal numbers of boys and girls of child-bearing age in each generation is assured. As far as the second rule is concerned, marriage within the maximal lineage is totally prohibited. Nevertheless, marriages occur between very close relatives. In the uterine line, one may marry cousins to the fourth degree (counting oneself) on the side of

11 It is mainly on this criterion (the use of a Brāhmaṇ or a Vajrācārya priest), that the Swāgumi distinguish between 'Hindus' *(śivamārgi)* and 'Buddhists' *(buddhamārgi)*. From a purely religious point of view, very little divides these two opposed religious groups. In Pyangaon, 'Hindus' and 'Buddhists' worship the same gods and participate in the same ceremonies.

the mother's brother, which allows for the renewal of alliances between lineages once the prohibitions cease to apply. In terms of kinship, the Swãgumi say that they marry in the generation of the great-grandchildren, the genealogical distances between collaterals here being reckoned in a vertical line. Beyond the third generation, they affirm, kinship disappears on the maternal line. This proximity of alliances, characteristic of many cognatic societies, induces the inhabitants of neighbouring villages to say that the Swãgumi used to marry matrilineal (as well as patrilineal) cross-cousins. Some features of the terminology of kinship, particularly the equivalence between the terms for mother's brother (MB) and father's sister's husband (FZH) and the terms for father's sister (FZ) and wife of mother's brother (MBW), support the assertion that this took place, at least in ancient times. The system of ceremonial exchanges, based on very strong avuncular relationships (Toffin 1984) reinforces this presumption. As for marriages in the agnatic line, they also take place within a narrow circle of kinship: the four Hindu exogamic patrilineages are characterised by little depth (five to six generations) and members from two different lineages can get married in the paternal line once beyond this genealogical limit. Yet there are no prescriptive matrimonial rules between the lineages. The high incidence of unions between Ācāḥ and Bu descent groups only reflects the fact that these groups are the two larger kinship units in the locality.

In other words, marriage must be contracted with a person who is neither too close, nor too distant. The main role of the heads of the lineages, chiefly the ones of the 'Hindu' descent groups, is to keep this middle course and to impose respect for the matrimonial rules. The structure of local power can be described as follows: each kin group is headed by three dignitaries, their referent pronounced locally as *thakāri* (literally, 'the oldest') instead of the usual Newar *thakālī*. The Wosikār, a relatively small group, have only two. These three elders, the oldest men in the lineage, each have their own title: the eldest one is called *nāyaḥ*, the second, *nwakū* and the third, *swakū* (or *wad)*. They manage most important village affairs and supply the symbolic focus for corporate action within Pyangaon. By extension, these headmen assure social control within the community and mediate in cases of conflict. In particular, no marriage can be performed without the approval of the twelve elders from the 'Hindu' lineages. If a Wosikār boy marries a Swãgumi girl,[12]

12 In some limited cases such as this one, the Wosikār are differentiated from other Swãgumi. On most occasions, they are considered full members of the community.

these twelve headmen need not be called upon. But their presence is compulsory if a Wosikār girl marries a boy from one of the four 'Hindu' lineages. Twenty days after the marriage ceremony, a great village feast, *deś bhway*, is held in the groom's house. If the twelve *thākari* dignitaries of the 'Hindu' lineages are not present at this social function, the wedding is considered null and void. The same happens in the case of divorce: any agreement on that matter also needs the approval of the twelve elders.

Clearly, such a social structure has little to do with the Hindu world. What we have here is a segmentary social system, where kinship commands the village community and constitutes its elementary code of reference. The village defines itself above all as a circle of relatives united by ties of blood and marriage. It is, moreover, interesting to point out that, unlike among high castes, the formal kinship terms between husband and wife, and between mothers- and daughters-in-law, are not used within the locality.[13] The values of descent group solidarity and territorial identity in a way take precedence over caste principles. Social stratification, for its part, is not based on Hindu patterns, but on the rules of lineage seniority and heredity. As a rule, power is mainly determined by age, genealogical position and gender. A small group of men, the elders, relying as we shall soon see on a complex set of symbols, presides over the destiny of the village.

A secret village deity

The religious life of the community revolves entirely around the god Kāleśvar Mahādev, who is locally known as Nikūncā Mahādyaḥ, 'Mahādev who lives in the two corners'—that is, of the street (see above). This Āgamic esoteric divinity is considered the tutelary deity, *kuldyaḥ* or indeed *āgādyaḥ* (New.), of the four 'Hindu' lineages of Pyangaon. The minority 'Buddhist' Wosikār group is excluded from his cult except on certain occasions, and has no *āgādyaḥ* deity of its own. However, its members participated in the restoration of Nikūncā Mahādyaḥ's temples in 2001-2002.

The statue representing the deity changes residence every year: one year it is placed in the temple to the south-east, and the next in the temple to the north-west. The move takes place on the full moon of Bhādra (August-September), the occasion of the god's annual festival, Mahādyaḥ

13 The Jyāpu living in urban centres are not on formal terms among family members either.

Jātrā, which is also the *deś jātrā*,[14] á major festival particular to the village. This is the only time during the year that the divine image is exposed to the eyes of all and can be worshipped by the Wosikār. Besides this ambulant statue (Skt. *utsava murti)*, Kāleśvar Mahādev is symbolised permanently in each of the two temples by a non-iconic representation. The image seems to be that of a vessel.

The cult of Kāleśvar Mahādev is patterned on the organisation of the lineages: the north-western temple is under the responsibility of the Ācāḥ group, while that in the south-east is cared for by the three other 'Hindu' maximal lineages of the village. The priests, *ācāḥju* or pujāyāyipīṃ (New.), belong to two kin groups: the Ācāḥ and the Bu. They may only enter into the temple associated with their own lineage; the other one is permanently forbidden to them. The sacerdotal function is transmitted from father to eldest son. The *ācāḥju* receive a Tantric consecration—*dekhā* (New.) or *dīkṣā* (Skt.)—from a Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ from Lalitpur, who previously would have been accompanied by a Karmācārya priest and his wife. The consecration is given only after the young boy has received his first loin-cloth—that is, after the *kaytā pūjā*, the puberty-rite that integrates a young man into his caste. The candidates for priesthood of the Bu lineage are initiated in the south-eastern temple, and those of the Ācāḥ lineage in the north-western one. They remain enclosed there for four days and learn their Tantric mantras, under the direction of their guru. The ceremony is always collective. At the end of the rite, the initiates offer a village-wide feast to the heads of the four 'Hindu' lineages.

Once the initiation process is over, the *ācāḥju* priests are compelled to observe certain rules: they must fetch the water for their morning ablutions themselves and must make an offering every morning to the sun-god Sūrya—a practice called *surye pūjā* (New.) or, in Pyangaon, *sūjhadyaḥ pūjā*. The *ācāḥju* of the two priestly lineages (Ācāḥ and Bu) possess supernatural powers which they are supposed to use during the rituals. To worship Kāleśvar Mahādev, however, they must wait until they become heads of families themselves (New. *chẽ mumha* or *chẽ thakāri)*. They will obtain this status when they begin to live separately from their fathers, or when their fathers pass away. This regulation allows the elders, collectively known as the *thakāri*, to

14 *Deś jātrā* or *mū jātrā* (New.). For a presentation and analysis of this local festival in Pyangaon, see Toffin (1984).

keep the cult of the deity under their control.

In addition to the annual festival, Kāleśvar Mahādev is worshipped at night every month on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight (New. *caḥray)*, a date on the lunar calendar considered auspicious for Tantric ceremonies.[15] Two of these monthly observances are particularly important: that of Caitra (March-April), *bāscaḥray*, and that of Śrāvaṇ (July-August), *gathāmugaḥcaḥray*. On these two occasions, the members of the 'Hindu' lineages get together at the temple of Kāleśvar to which they are attached, to make offerings and partake of a ceremonial meal. However, only elders of the male sex—that is, those men who are heads of their households—have access to the first floor where the statue of Mahādev is kept. The 'juniors' *(kwaḥkāri)*, women and children must remain on the ground floor in front of a statue of Bhairav, to whom blood-offerings of duck or goat are made.[16] Moreover, only the *ācāḥju* priests may approach the image of the *āgādyaḥ* to worship it. The temple is thus not only a sacred area; it also reflects the socio-religious hierarchy of the village. It is a place of power in more ways than one.

The monthly ritual, *caḥray pūjā*, closes with a procession led by the lineage headmen and accompanied by two low-caste musicians especially called from outside for the occasion. At *bāscaḥray* (March-April), the remains of the ceremonial meal (rice cakes) are thrown together with some torches at the place called *kālko* at the edge of the village. As we have already seen, this rite, called *catāmari chāygu* (New.), symbolises the elimination of the evil spirits and malign influences which prowl the village at that time of the year. The Ācāḥ lineage does not take part in this ritual: on account of their superior status, the members of this group avoid contact with filth and dangerous powers. At *gathāmugaḥcaḥray* (July-August), only the torches are left on the outskirts of Pyangaon. In both instances, families barricade themselves inside their homes as soon as the expelling ceremony is over, having previously placed nails on the door-frames and on the second-floor window frames to keep out the demons. The villagers do not come out of their houses again until the next morning. These cathartic rituals, which pacify the territory, are reminiscent of the village boundary-closing ceremonies of tribal India (Macdonald 1975: 81-101; Krauskopff 1987). At least in principle, they

15 This is so for the whole of the Indian subcontinent. Cf. *Kulāvarṇatantra* (X, 79), and also P.V. Kane 1977 (Vol. II, Part 2: 1070).

16 Some informants say that an image of Bhairava is also kept on the first floor, in a place more accessible than the representation of Kāleśvar Mahādev.

are secret; those foreign to the village may not attend.[17]

Elders and juniors: The law of silence

The cult of Kāleśvar Mahādev, which is simultaneously Tantric, kin-based, and associated with the tutelary deity of the village, reveals an essential feature of the social morphology of Pyangaon: the division between the elders (household headmen), and the juniors. These two age-classes are fundamental to the village's political pattern. The former have the power and the authority; the latter exercise no control over the decisions made within the group, and are relegated to a situation of dependence. Prohibitions and privileges are distributed entirely in accordance with age. As we have seen, only the elders have the right to approach the god in the Āgamic temple; the juniors—and women—are limited to the ground floor. The passage from the status of junior to that of household headman, which marks the integration of the individual into the decision-making body of the community, thus corresponds to an initiation process: the revelation of a god—or of his abiding symbol—and of a sacred space that was previously out of bounds. To see the divine image requires a particular religious quality, and, at the same time, seeing the image consecrates this privilege.

What conclusions can be drawn from this? Admittedly, the ceremonies described are performed in a very ritualistic manner, almost mechanically. Nonetheless, they are important from a political point of view. Religion here seems strongly instrumentalised: it legitimates relationships of power. The ritual hierarchy is re-enacted and revived during the numerous ceremonial feasts that punctuate the year for members of the cult of Kāleśvar. At these feasts, elders and juniors are seated separately and by age, and are served according to a meticulous system of etiquette. The slightest infringement of the rules of honour and protocol could endanger the social order.

This gives us a better understanding of the secret aspect of the village. The hidden dimension associated with almost every Āgamic deity[18] is spread over Pyangaon village in its entirety. If the heads of households are unwilling to say anything about their village, it is be-

17 Like most Newars, the Swāgumi have another lineage deity, or *digudyaḥ*. I analysed this deity in detail in a previous work (Toffin 1984). It is associated with Kāleśvar Mahādev but never has any physical contact with him. It is worshipped outside the village proper, in a field situated to the west of the settlement.

18 As is known, secrecy is an essential element of Tantric practice.

cause the Swāgumi (excepting the Wosikār) are bound to absolute secrecy about the worship of a concealed god upon whom the entire social structure is centred. The concealment itself is more important than what is being hidden. The admission of the new household's headmen to the first floor of the temple of Kāleśvar—unlike the initiation of the *ācāḥju* priests—is not associated with a mystical or pedagogical training: it is essentially a social rite of passage whose function is to reproduce a hierarchical division. The silence required of all heads of families creates the secrecy characteristic of Pyangaon and imposes obligations of restraint, oppressing the village through what is unspoken. In Pyangaon, the status of individuals is linked not so much to the knowledge they communicate, as to the knowledge they withhold.

Secrecy serves, thus, not only as a sign of identity and recognition, but also as a tool for the domination of juniors by the elders. If the latter maintain silence on matters related to the god Kāleśvar, to the local dialect, to the bases of social organisation and so on, it is above all as an assertion of their authority. Spoken language is imprisoned in a network of codifications and subordinations. Whole areas of verbal communication are prohibited. As has been emphasised about some African societies: 'Condemned to the exclusive use of speech, lineage societies learn to mistrust and avoid it [...]. One is not free to say anything, anywhere, anytime' (Jamin 1977). In a similar pattern, the use of the oral language among the Swāgumi relates to the exercising of power. The divulging of what is considered secret, however trivial, would entail a major explosion within the social fabric.

In a society so controlled and framed by such a censorious system of constraints, religious beliefs and rituals seem completely dissolved into the social structure, and embedded within the age hierarchy. These villagers do not seem open to the transcendent aspects associated with religious experience in many religions of the world. They have only a vague acquaintance with the fundamental concepts of the two great religious traditions present in the Valley, Hinduism and Buddhism, which could have brought them that dimension. Their religiosity, based on a complete intertwining of the sacred and the profane, of the spiritual and the material, is principally immanent. Their deities, starting with Kāleśvar Mahādev, are used primarily to stress the identities of the lineages. These divine forces are principles of social organisation rather than symbols of an inaccessible other world. Their images communicate a body of sacred teachings in a very secondary manner. Rather, they are instruments

of social prestige, a means of exercising influence over others. Interestingly, the worship these gods receive is always mediated by the village's groupings; it is never—or only very rarely—individual.

As for the phenomenon of supernatural possession, especially prominent in sacred dances, it remains marginal in Pyangaon and essentially takes place under the authority of the elders or the officiating *ācāḥju*. Perhaps the only religious element uncontrolled by the circle of elders is the three women who are consulted in cases of disease caused by supernatural beings. These mediums, called *dyaḥ ikeimha* or *dyaḥ waikepīṃ* in Newar,[19] can fall into states of possession quite independently of either any regular observance or the established hierarchy. Such instances of therapeutic practice, which are accompanied by diagnosis, correspond more or less to the concept of peripheral possession suggested by Ioan Lewis (1971). To my knowledge, however, these forms of mystical trance, which can be found in any Nepali village, do not constitute a serious threat to the social order.

An annual pilgrimage

Kāleśvar Mahādev's ancestral home, or *kulchẽ* (New.), is located on the summit of a hill near the place called Pulã Sankhu, from where the founders of Pyangaon originally came. It is a pilgrimage site visited as much by the Newar and the Parbatiyā castes of the surrounding areas as by the local Tamang, whose shamans consider Mahādev one of their main gurus. The Swãgumi say that when the first immigrants came to settle in Pyangaon, they decided to take this deity with them. Till this day, every year on the full moon of Caitra (March-April), the villagers come to this temple, situated a day's walk to the south. The pilgrimage mobilises some 250 people: men, women and children. Each household must send a representative, including those of the Wosikār 'Buddhist' group, who participate in this observance. Thus, year after year, the inhabitants of Pyangaon return to the place of their origin and renew their link with legendary time. The pilgrimage is also an occasion for the fulfilment of vows (New. *bhākal pheygu)* made individually over the course of the year. As such, it mingles personal and collective religiosity.

19 This must derive from *iku*, 'feeling of dizziness [...], to be dizzy, to faint' (Manandhar 1986: 14). Possession is called *dyaḥ waye* in Newar. We should also mention the presence of six healers, *phū phāyāypīṃ* (New.), all of them male, who utter incantations and chase away evil with a small bamboo broom (New. *tuphi)*. Unlike the mediums, these men never enter into a trance.

The journey takes three days. On the first day, the pilgrims cross Lele Bhanjyang, Tileswar, Dhunga, Babcauri, Thosne Khola, and Kotwan (Manikhel). In the evening they reach a temple dedicated to Manānkāl (or Mahāṃkāl), to whom they sacrifice goats. After this, the heads of the animals, the noblest part of any sacrificial victim, are eaten in a ritual manner by the headmen of the lineages and by the *ācāḥju* priests—a total of twelve people—at a feast called *sī kāḥ bhway*.[20] Incidentally, it should be indicated that the Swāgumi cannot eat boiled rice during the pilgrimage; they consume only flattened rice, meat and vegetables. The next morning, the pilgrims reach Kāleśvar. On behalf of each lineage, the *ācāḥju* priests make offerings of flowers called *tari swāṃ* (New.), which grow on precipices, and of coins, half of which will be buried on site. They also sacrifice ducks to some auxiliary deities, represented by stones, who, unlike Mahādev, accept blood-offerings. The place is sacred; it is forbidden to wear leather shoes or belts on the spot. Care is taken not to allow dogs near the sanctuary.

On the second evening, the pilgrims sleep at Kotwan, in the houses of Tamangs or of Jaisīs of the Parbatiyā caste. They return to their village on the third day. At a place called Bhagaban (or Kvaḥgu), which marks the entry to 'the Valley', the *ācāḥju* priests distribute among the participants what is left of the flowers offered to Kāleśvar the day before *(prasād)*.[21] This ritual is called *swāṃ bhinigu*.[22] Then the *ācāḥju* makes a red mark (New. *sinhāḥ)* on the forehead of all the Swāgumi present as a sign of sanctification. As they arrive at Pyangaon, the pilgrims visit all the sacred sites in the village, bowing down before each god. They are accompanied by an oboe player of the Kusle, or Kāpāli, caste and a drum-player of the Doṃ, or Bādikār caste (Chapter 5).

On the following day, each family delegates one of its members to worship the Tantric goddess Vajravārāhī, whose aniconic place of worship (Nep. *pīṭh*, New. *pīgā*) is situated in a sacred forest not far from Pyangaon. This deity, served by Hindu Karmācārya priests from Chapagaon, plays a central role in the religious life of the region. The Swāgumi pay homage to her four days after every important ceremony,

20 On this ceremonial sharing and eating of animals' heads, cf. Toffin (1976). In Pyangaon I recorded a local expression, *karā swikigu*, to designate this ceremonial meal.

21 The Sanskrit word *nirmālya*, the remains of an offering to a god, is not known to the inhabitants of Pyangaon.

22 Literally, the 'flower-giving'. In spoken Newar, this is more commonly pronounced *swāṃ biyegu*.

either public or familial. It seems that when they came to settle in Pyangaon, they placed themselves under the protection of this goddess. Consequently, it is natural that, during a pilgrimage evoking their original migration, they should collectively renew their allegiance to Vajravārāhī. They offer her *tari swāṃ* flowers picked on Kāleśvar Mahādev's hill.

Finally, a village feast, *deś bhway*, brings together all the inhabitants of Pyangaon. The banquet takes place behind the houses, in the gardens of one of the four heads of the 'Hindu' lineages. One or two Wosikār attend to testify to the unified nature of the local community. The expenses for the feast are covered by the offerings of money made to Kāleśvar Mahādev, part of the sum of which has been brought back by the *ācāḥju* priests. If this amount is insufficient, the lineage headman whose turn it is to host the banquet pays the difference and is later reimbursed by the villagers.

This pilgrimage is characterised by a festive mood and the suspension of daily activities. It reactivates the social ties that unite the villagers and reinforces the sense of belonging to the locality. Sociologically, this religious event is simultaneously consensual and differentiating. It is consensual because it brings together all the inhabitants of Pyangaon in a common sacred celebration, defining a single moral community and a distinctive collectivity. It is differentiating because the groups are demarcated in accordance with the structural relationships between and within each of them. Each unit of kinship is represented there by its own headman. The Wosikār are set apart from the 'Hindu' lineages, as are the lineages possessing *ācāḥju* priests from those that do not. Hence, the pilgrimage expresses the formal relationships that tie individuals and groups into the social fabric. It is a sociological indicator of paramount importance.

Exclusion or inclusion: The great dispute

Some 60 years ago a serious dispute (New. *lwāpu)* erupted in Pyangaon, and created an enduring division of the village into two opposing factions. Mutuality and conviviality, which, according to the Swãgumi, once characterised village life as a whole, was lost to a conflict and intense hostility between two competing groups. How did it all start? In 1947-48, a Swãgumi woman named Basala left her husband, a man of the Tahā lineage, to live with a Jyāpu of Lalitpur (some say a Tepay, a low rank sub-caste of the Jyāpu, often considered to be a distinct peasant caste in itself). Three years later, Basala came back to her natal village and to her ex-husband. The

return of this woman, who had two children with her Pyangaon husband, raised an acute problem: should her escapade be forgotten and should she be accepted back into the community? Part of the village, headed by a man called Buddhye, was against this. This group demanded that Basala, who had married outside of Pyangaon, and moreover to a man suspected to be of an inferior sub-caste, be expelled from the lineage cult—a guarantor of the social order—and deprived of all her religious rights in the community. In a place like Pyangaon, such an expulsion (New. *pi cuyegu)* would have been equivalent to banishment; excluded from all sacred collective activities, the individual would have no social existence. The other camp defended Basala and refused to ostracise her. This group was led by the tax collector, or *dwāḥre*, which was an important administrative position until the post was abolished in 1951 (Toffin 1984). In all probability, the disagreement reactivated a whole system of local political allegiances and a series of family conflicts that are difficult to reconstruct so many years after the event. It was, in any case, the first time that an internal clash took such dramatic expression. The affair escalated and culminated in a legal case, even being brought before the Supreme Court *(Sarvocca Adālat)*. In the end, the *dwāḥre* won the case and thereby also obtained the right to perform the annual village dance during Pyangaon's main festival at the end of the month of Bhādra (August-September). But the crisis was too serious not to have a lasting impact on the unity of the village.

In 1988, nearly two decades after my 1971-72 fieldwork, the rift still divided the kinship groups from within. The group which had defended Basala comprised 42 households (17 Ācāḥ, 10 Bu, five Tahā and 21 Parba) and formed the majority.[23] The fifth lineage, the 'Buddhist' Wosikār, had been similarly polarised in 1975, following a conflict which, as with the previous one, concerned the relationship between the locality and the outside world. That year, some families had attended the funeral procession of a Jyāpu man who had been a long-time resident of Pyangaon but who had originally come from a neighbouring village. The rest of the maximal lineage grew angry at this sympathy for a 'foreigner' and decided to separate in ritual matters from the more compassionate families. This series of feuds no doubt reveals a crisis within the lineage organisation. Interestingly, such crises seem quite structural to Newar society.

23 In 2003, the faction that supported the eloped woman numbered 70 households. The other consisted of around only 40 families.

Many cases similar to the ones described in Pyangaon were reported to me subsequently from other localities. As a matter of fact, inner conflicts turn out to be an essential element of Newar social life, a way to construct society and to establish bonds between individuals.

The internal frontier that had split the village into two hostile factions (New. *pākhe*; literally, 'side') from that time has had little effect on marriages and everyday relationships. It seems that during the years immediately following the quarrel, the two groups did not marry amongst or even speak to each other. After a few years, however, they resumed marriages and started to visit each other's houses on ceremonial occasions. Yet the conflict had completely disrupted the religious life of the locality. For example, the village festival is at present organised exclusively by the group to whom the *dwāḥre* used to belong. The members of the other faction attend the worship of the god, but are no longer involved in the festive rituals or sacred dances, *kūṃ pyākhā* (New.) that take place at that time of year (Toffin 1984). The cult of Kāleśvar has also split in two. The units of worship no longer amount to four (one for each 'Hindu' lineage), but eight, and indeed ten if we add the two Wosikār groups that take part in the annual pilgrimage during the month of Caitra. Every month, on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight, the members of the two factions pay homage to Mahādev separately, one group after the other. Each faction has its own Tantric *ācāḥju* priests and separate set of keys to the temple. With a few exceptions, the banquets that accompany the ceremonies associated with the Āgamic deity are also carried out separately. Thus, during the journey to Kāleśvar, pilgrims take their ceremonial meal in groups of four: two for the 'Hindus', and two for the minority 'Buddhists'. Religious practices, too, are determined by factional rifts.

What should be pointed out here is that membership of one's *pākhe*, 'side', is inherited from the family and not chosen by the individual. A man will usually belong to his father's faction. Upon marriage, the woman joins not only the kinship unit and the cult of the tutelary gods of her husband, but also his 'side'. The factions are thus completely institutionalised and socially established. They have lost their optional character.

Interestingly enough, the story of this quarrel throws light on the connections between religion and lineage organisation. In a Newar social setting, an individual is not considered a full member of a group unless he participates in the cult of the deity that presides over that social unit.

In other words, the cults of the gods play a fundamental social role: they classify, divide and identify the components of society. If common worship of a deity is necessary for the constitution of a lineage, the collapse of this collectivity must logically also produce fission among the worshipping group. This is what has happened in Pyangaon: in order to be recognised, the two factions, originating in the 1940s, had to develop distinct cultural identities. Each worship Kāleśvar Mahādev in an autonomous manner. Politics, in this case, is entirely defined by the sacred. The spheres of power and of religion are completely merged. As has been stressed above, the process of social stratification is endowed with a sacred dimension. Before and after the conflict, control over people and territory depended on the control over a deity. In this respect, Kāleśvar Mahādev's role is not much different from that of the territorial gods of the Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups of the Nepal hills, who also set up a strong connection between this world and the supernatural one.[24]

All Newar villages are divided by internal disputes. Ishii (1987) has described the details of a conflict which for almost 50 years has opposed Śreṣṭha merchants to Jyāpu farmers in the Satungal locality according to lines which are constantly shifting. What is unique in Pyangaon, is that such divisions appear in a single-caste environment characterised by narrow social differentiation and a strong lineage infrastructure. We might moreover conjecture that the violent nature of the antagonisms and the repeated subdivisions in local territorial politics that the quarrel entails, have been heightened by the closed character of this social space and by the internal tensions generated by the prohibition on marrying outside of it. The isolationism imposed by lineage headmen is, in fact, hardly feasible, especially in a fast-changing world increasingly open to modernity. Elders' control over political and religious life, their complete command over marriages, the supervision they exercise over family matters, create an atmosphere that many find oppressive and that some, especially the young, cannot easily accept. This repressive hierarchical structure is the source of conflict between generations. It generates a tension that nothing can moderate efficiently. Inherent in wanting too much order, is there not the risk of producing disorder instead? Is not the schism in the village the result of matrimonial parochialism and an exaggerated policing of social relationships?

24 On these deities, see Toffin (1987).

The opening up of Pyangaon

Today, Pyangaon is slowly opening its doors. The stories retold in this chapter vividly illustrate this fact. In 1970, the elders of the village threatened my informants with exclusion if they dared disclose Pyangaon's 'secrets'. Almost 20 years later, in 1988, the young people who spontaneously offered to help me during my enquiry did not hesitate to give me information on matters considered sensitive. They did not worry about how the lineage headmen would react. The law of silence, apparently, has grown weaker and can now be ignored without causing general opprobrium. By agreeing to tell me some 'secrets', these young people were not merely showing their goodwill towards me. They were also doubtless trying to emancipate themselves from the tutelage of the *thakāli* elders and to transform Pyangaon, if not into a village like any other (for all Newar settlements are intensely introverted), at least into one more open to the outside world.

This opening up must be ascribed first and foremost to significant progress in education and to what we may, for want of a better term, call the modernisation of the Kathmandu Valley. In 1970, Pyangaon was very backward with respect to elementary schooling. Very few children, and those too only males, went to school. In 1988, this situation had not changed radically: the Swãgumi still preferred to invest whatever money they might have earned from the sale of agricultural surplus, in land and buildings rather than in the education of their children. However, schooling did attract more students than it had done formerly, and there were that year 56 people in the village capable of reading fluently (1988). Above all, there existed in the 1980s a small minority of young people who pursued their studies beyond the primary school level, either in Patan or in Chapagaon. Five of these have passed the tenth grade School Leaving Certificate examination, and two have received Bachelor's degrees. One is now working as an engineer for the Nepal Electricity Authority, the government's electricity company, and another is teaching at the secondary school in Lele. These young people have concerns very different from those of their elders. Their prospects involve a wider world; they wish to take advantage of the transformations that have been affecting the Valley, and to modernise their village.

In 1988, there were eight Swãgumis working in Kathmandu (called *sahar*, 'the City'), as employees or clerks in various administrative offices. When they came home to Pyangaon on Saturdays for the weekend or, in some cases, every evening, these urban wage-earners would bring

with them new ideas and attitudes. Considerable changes can be felt in Pyangaon's lifestyles. Old people and many younger adults still dress in garments made from locally woven cloth, but those of the younger generations more frequently wear clothes bought in the market. Some women have abandoned the traditional wraparound with the red border, a typical marker of Jyāpuni farmers, for brightly-coloured saris. The interiors of the houses are for the most part unchanged, but their facades are sometimes covered in cement, in the current fashion of the cities.

Despite these changes, the social structure described above has remained intact for the most part. During my recent visits to the village, I came to notice that the rule of territorial endogamy was still in force, at least in its main lines, within the locality. In the 1980s, only two Swāgumi women had found husbands outside the village. Six non-Swāgumi women had married inhabitants of Pyangaon since 1973, and had come to live with their husbands in the village: two were Jyāpu (one from Campi), two were Mājhi from Dang, and the remaining two were originally Chetrī or Khatrī (Non-Newar castes). The husbands of these inter-caste couples continue to participate in lineage reunions and to celebrate the cult of Kāleśvar Mahādev. Even so, their wives and children are not allowed to join in the customary banquets and the wider religious life of the village. In most villagers' opinion, these mixed-castes will get together in a special association *(guthi)* in a few years' time and set up their own cult, with their own gods and their own ceremonial occasions. This will enable them to differentiate themselves from the others, while at the same time claiming a fully-fledged place in the community. These breaches in the rules of endogamy have undermined the traditional authority of the elders and the lineage structure. However, they have hitherto not brought into question the identity of the village community.

Between 1988 and 2003, only eight women were brought into Pyangaon from outside, and six Swāgumi women took a husband outside the village proper. The offspring of marriages of the first type were still excluded from entering the *guthi*, or lineage or religious association, of the father. The juniors, however, were now trying to obtain from the *thakāli* an arrangement for women from outside belonging to the Jyāpu peasant caste. They wanted the children of a Swāgumi man and an 'outsider' Jyāpu woman to be allowed to participate in the main ceremonies of the village. The children from other unions, for example between a Swāgumi man and a Tamang, Chetrī or even Śreṣṭha woman, were still contemplating the establishment of a special *guthi* for themselves, out-

side the internal religious web of Pyangaon. But no decision had been taken thus far.

This opening up affects not only the social and religious life of Pyangaon but also its territorial boundaries. The increase in the number of buildings over recent years has entailed an extreme concentration of new construction along the main road, at the periphery of the old settlement. If this process continues—as, by all evidence, it will—the frontiers between Pyangaon, Chapagaon and the neighbouring Newar villages of Bulu and Theco will become increasingly blurred. In two or three decades, these will become one great conurbation of twenty to thirty thousand people, the occupations of which will be less and less oriented towards agriculture. How will Pyangaon maintain its identity within such a framework? It is likely that the inhabitants will be compelled, if not to give up, at least to loosen their matrimonial embargo on the world outside.

Conclusions

In an earlier study, I argued that the Swãgumi represented 'an exemplary instance of the old peasant institutions' (Toffin 1984: 64) and what I call a 'tribal substratum' of Newar civilisation (*idem*: 587). Admittedly, Hinduism has heavily influenced the inhabitants of Pyangaon and their religious and cultural practices; their divinities—though they may be designated by indigenous, non-Indic names—and the nature of their complex rituals testify to processes of Hinduisation. Socially, however, the segmentary organisation of the village, the presence of a classificatory kinship system, as well as the importance of territory in the social structure clearly connect the Swãgumi with other Tibeto-Burman groups of the Nepal hills such as the Rai or the Tamang, rather than with Hindu Parbatiyã castes.

While fully recognising the 'tribal' character of the village, my colleagues D. Gellner and R. Pradhan (1995: 177) suggest that the Swãgumi may represent a very peculiar case of a population that came from elsewhere and has only recently been Newarised. As we have seen, one version of the myth of their origin claims that they were the issue of a union between a Newar man and a Tamang woman. The segmentary features of their social structure might derive from such mixed origins. However, there are reasons to believe that the settlement of the Swãgumi in the Kathmandu Valley—perhaps between the 15th and 16th centuries—was in fact a *return* to the land of their origin, from which their

ancestors had been driven away at an earlier time. It is not impossible that marginal groups such as the Pahari, the Balāmi and the Gāma, with whom the Swāgumi are obviously linked, had been driven to the hills by invaders or as a result of political conflicts. Several of these groups, who currently live on the edges of the Valley—and we should also include the Dwīṃ (or Putuwār), the Khusaḥ (or Taṇḍukār), the Gwā, and the Tepay (or Vyañjankār), some of whom still inhabit urban environments—also claim to be of royal extraction. They consider their present status a degraded one, and caused by a mistake committed by their ancestors. According to oral tradition, the Kirāṭa, whose chronicles affirm that they governed the Valley in a bygone age, were also chased towards the hills. The Tepay of Lalitpur still maintain today that they descend from these ancient kings (Toffin 1984: 235).[25] All things considered, I feel that the peripheral groups in question have much to teach us about the history of the settlement of the Kathmandu Valley, a 'melting pot' of populations of diverse origins. It would be a mistake to consider these groups only through the lens of a recent Newarisation. Let us moreover recall that the word 'Newar' did not appear until the 17th century (Chapter 12): *all* of the castes that today constitute this ethnic group must have been Newarised at a given time in their history.

Given the present level of research, of course, these are only unverifiable hypotheses, but it would be an error to reject them a priori. The next question is the following: is Pyangaon an exceptional case within the Kathmandu Valley? Is it all that dissimilar to other Jyāpu villages? My experiences and enquiries among rural Jyāpu communities that fall within Lalitpur District (see Chapter 6 on some limited aspects) lead me to conclude that the Swāgumi are not all that different from other groupings of Newar Jyāpu farmers. They possess, of course, some unique features, but on the whole, the Swāgumi share with other Jyāpu village communities the same lifestyle, the same material culture, the same attachment to associations and festivals, and the same sense of unity and mutuality. They also give death and funerals the same religious and social centrality. Marriage, on the contrary, is not celebrated in a complex manner, with great ceremonies, as is the case among high Hindu Newar castes. Furthermore, the segmentary structure of lineage arrangements,

25 According to Hodgson, the Vyañjankār (like the Balāmi) are a sub-caste of the Khusaḥ (quoted in Chattopadhyay 1980: 97-98). Cf. also Gellner and Pradhan (1995: 165). On the importance of the perhaps imaginary traces of the Kirāṭa kings in the Kathmandu Valley, cf. Slusser (1982).

the classificatory features of the nomenclature of kinship—especially in the terminology used for affines—the identification MB=FZH and FZ=MBW (perhaps a distant reminiscence of marriages between cross-cousins), the introversion of the social structure, the importance of recently created factions, the high rate of endogamy within the village, the territorial dimension of kinship units, the relevance of religious symbols for social control and local politics: all these characterise the whole range of Jyāpu sub-castes as much as they do the Swãgumi.

Recent studies only confirm these correlations. I found in Theco a morphology which, although more complex and more diversified, nonetheless evokes that of Pyangaon (Toffin 1984: 183-204). Another anthropologist (B. Pradhan 1981) has described, in the Jyāpu village of Bulu (New. Bhūlu), matrimonial customs, including a high incidence of divorce, which have points of resemblance with those of the Swãgumi. The Jyāpu of the cities themselves are roughly organised according to the same principles. As in Pyangaon, sons-in-law have lower status: they must perform certain 'degrading' tasks for their parents-in-law at funerals (carrying the dead body, for instance) and at some festivals (Gellner and Pradhan 1995: 177).[26] This is very far from the system of kinship of the high Hindu Newar castes of the cities and the countryside, who grant an almost divine status to their sons-in-law. It should be added that the Tepay of Lalitpur, like the Swãgumi, are charged by their immediate neighbours of having their men marry the daughters of their maternal uncles or paternal aunts.

If Pyangaon's lineage system is more pure—but also perhaps more conflictual—the reason must be sought in the low population of the village, its homogeneity in terms of caste,[27] and the almost complete matrimonial isolationism that characterises it. The latter two features are undoubtedly caused by the hostile environment the Swãgumi would have had to face when they settled in the south of the Valley. By claiming a higher status, the inhabitants of Pyangaon condemned themselves to exclusion and confinement, and were obliged to reinforce social control within their community—at the risk of generating internal tensions. This is how the story of Pyangaon appears to me after two decades: a truth still hidden behind a barrier of secrets. The fact of geographical mobility—a sign of a certain fluidity in the system—contributed paradoxically

26 I collected the same information among the Maharjan of Kathmandu.

27 Some other villages in Lalitpur District, such as Sunaguthi and Khokana, are also populated almost exclusively by Jyāpu farmers. See Muller (1988).

to an extreme strictness in social organisation. Anthropologists have too often neglected the interactions between the general and the particular, and between the centre and the periphery of a society.

The compact social architecture of Pyangaon and its almost obsessive sense of difference and secrecy have almost certainly been accentuated by historical circumstances. Obviously these characteristics have not been transmitted in a 'pure' or 'original' manner from a steady past. They have been constructed over a long period of time. Does not every locality, after all, have its own unique history, with its own accidents and contradictions? Undoubtedly, this is one of the major lessons we can learn from the study of rural communities in South Asia, the Himalaya, and beyond.

Plate 1. A Citrakār repainting the chariot of the Royal Kumārī, or 'Living Goddess', just before the Indra Jātrā festival (Yēnyāḥ) in Kathmandu (1973) [Chapter 1].

Plate 2. A Citrakār mask-maker preparing a mask with black clay. The mould *(thāsā)* which is placed under the cloth is also made of clay (Bhaktapur 1974) [Chapter 1].

Plate 3. A Rājopadhyāya Brāhmaṇ directs a *śrāddha* (ancestor worship) ceremony by the river in Panauti. The main celebrant, a Prajāpatī (potter), wears a thread in the prescribed inauspicious manner under his left armpit for the duration of the ritual; he is assisted by a member of his family. To the left of the Brāhmaṇ priest is his Karmācārya assistant (1979) [Chapter 2].

Plate 4. The cylindrical *dhimay* drum (Nyeta twāḥ), Kathmandu. This drum is traditionally played only by members of the Jyāpu caste (1993) [Chapter 3].

Plate 5. *Waḥlāḥ* ceremony in the courtyard of the Pacalī Bhairava temple in the lower part of the old Kathmandu city (Dasaĩ festival, Āśvin, *śukla* 5, 1993). This ceremony marks the beginning of the *dhimay* drum apprenticeship. Boys receive rice (*saruwā jāki)* from their *nini* (father's sisters) and *tatā* (elder sisters) [Chapter 3].

Plate 6. *Dhimay* drum players from Nyeta twāḥ during the *dhimay pidanegu* on Āśvin, *kṛṣṇa* 9, 1993, at the conclusion of their *dhimay* apprenticeship. On this occasion, some of the young musicians and most of their gurus wear the traditional Maharjan ceremonial dress. This ceremony is performed once every twelve years, just before the Dasaĩ (Mwaḥni) national festival, in each Maharjan quarter of old Kathmandu [Chapter 3].

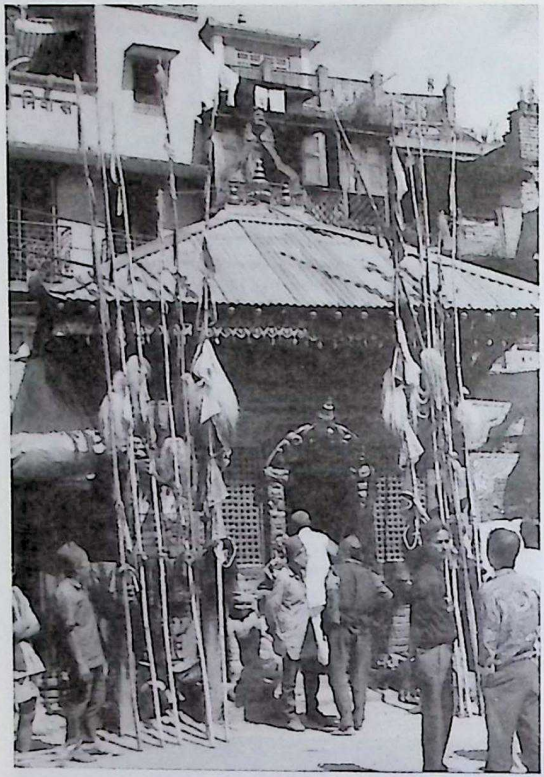


Plate 7. Twelve *dhunyā* poles associated with *dhimay* drums, are placed outside the Nāsaḥdyaḥ temple (Thāhiti, upper part of old Kathmandu) on the day of the *dhimay pidanegu* of Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ twāḥ. [Chapter 3].

Plate 8. A young Maharjan boy of Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ twaḥ is swinging and operating the *dhunyā* pole in an acrobatic position during the *māḥ tāḥnegu* performance [Chapter 3].

Plate 9. During the *māḥ tāḥnegu* ceremony, two Jyāpu men from the upper part of Kathmandu swing their *dhunyā* pole while walking on mini-stilts (New. *sī tuti)*, 1994. These wooden mini-stilts are attached to the legs by bands of white fabric. They are only used on this occasion [Chapter 3].

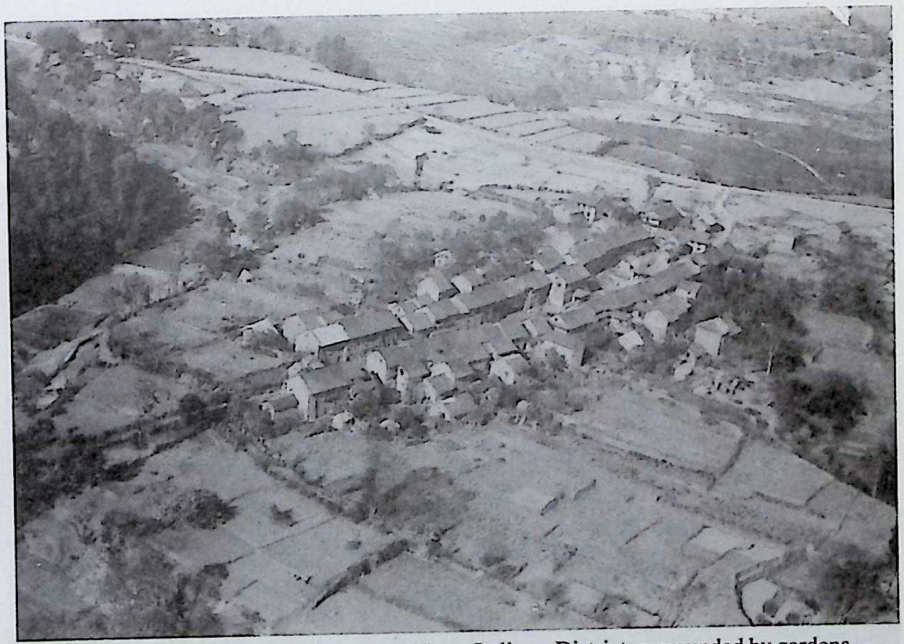


Plate 10. Aerial photograph of Pyangaon village, Lalitpur District, surrounded by gardens *(keba)* and dry fields (1972) [Chapter 4].

Plate 11. The unique street of Pyangaon with the maize harvest laid out on wooden structures to dry in front of the houses (September 1974). This picture was taken one year after the introduction of electricity in the village [Chapter 4].

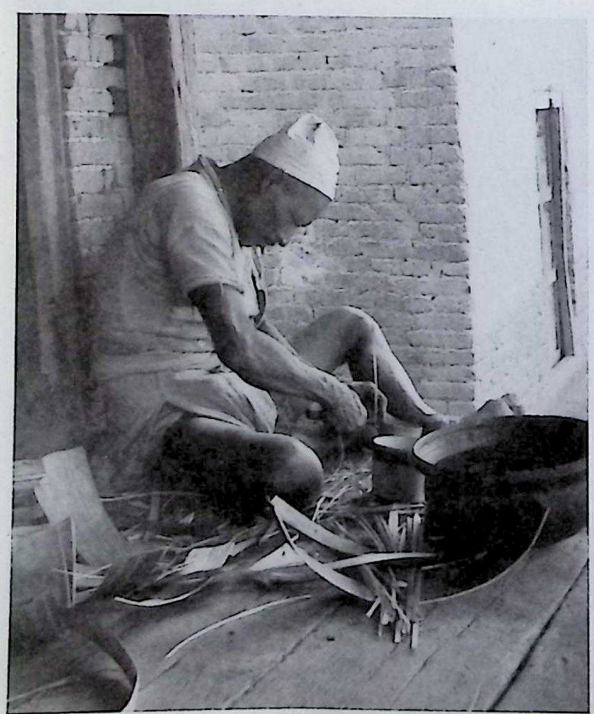


Plate 12. A Swãgumi making a bamboo box for storing spices and other food items. He is working on a shelter *(phalcā)* near his house (Pyangaon, 1972) [Chapter 4].

Plate 13. *Kaytā pūjā* male initiation ceremony. The child is dressed in white clothes. He is carrying a stick in the right hand and a quiver made of deer skin on his back, the symbol of forest life (Pyangaon, 1971) [Chapter 4].

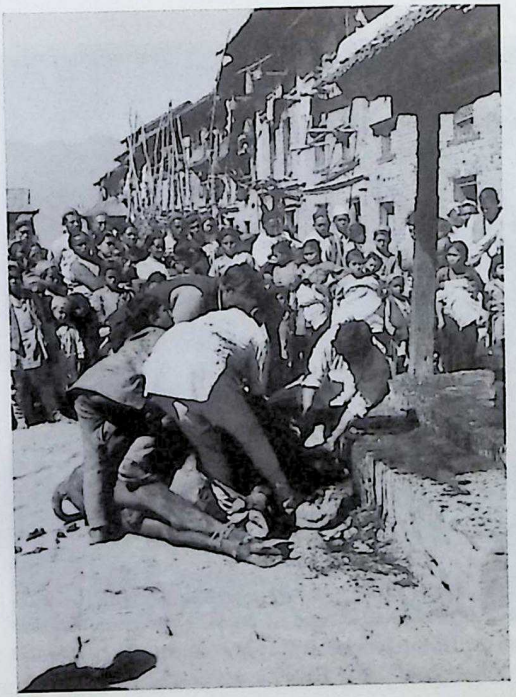


Plate 14. Buffalo sacrifice to the local Ganedyaḥ (Gaṇeśa) temple on the occasion of a male initiation celebration. The persons in charge of the slaughtering belong to the Newar butcher caste (Pyangaon, 1971) [Chapter 4].

Plate 15. The two 'maternal uncles' *(pajupīṃ)* of the boy undergoing the male initiation ceremony stand on each side of the local Ganedyaḥ temple. They will be splashed with the blood of the sacrificed buffalo [Chapter 4].

Plate 16. A band of musicians belonging to the Newar butcher caste plays during the *kaytā pūjā* ceremony (Pyangaon, 1971) [Chapter 5].

Plate 17. Final day of the death group's celebration in Theco village, Lalitpur District (full moon day of Mārga, Thīlā Punhī, 1994). Four Jyāpu headmen, wearing a white turban and white skirts *(jāmā)*, are welcomed by the *guthi* members of the related *sanāḥ guthi* association before entering the *guthi*'s house. They hold various religious items, in particular a representation of Agnidyaḥ, the Hindu god of fire Agni, and of Sidyaḥ, the patron deity of the funeral group. The main festival of the village *(khat jātrā)* starts from that day onward [Chapter 6].

Plate 18. First outside performance *(pidanegu)* of three *kāhāḥ* players belonging to the Gathu caste of Theco village, after tuition apprenticeship. This long *kāhāḥ* trumpet is played locally during Mwaḥani (Dasaī), the main festival *(mū jātrā)* of the village (Thīlā Punhī), funeral processions, as well as during the full moon of Bhādra (Yēnyāḥ Punhī). This photograph was taken just before the main festival of Theco. [Chapter 6].

Plate 15. The two 'maternal uncles' *(pajupīṃ)* of the boy undergoing the male initiation ceremony stand on each side of the local Ganedyaḥ temple. They will be splashed with the blood of the sacrificed buffalo [Chapter 4].

Plate 16. A band of musicians belonging to the Newar butcher caste plays during the *kaytā pūjā* ceremony (Pyangaon, 1971) [Chapter 5].

Plate 17. Final day of the death group's celebration in Theco village, Lalitpur District (full moon day of Mārga, Thīlā Punhī, 1994). Four Jyāpu headmen, wearing a white turban and white skirts *(jāmā)*, are welcomed by the *guthi* members of the related *sanāḥ guthi* association before entering the *guthi*'s house. They hold various religious items, in particular a representation of Agnidyaḥ, the Hindu god of fire Agni, and of Sidyaḥ, the patron deity of the funeral group. The main festival of the village *(khat jātrā)* starts from that day onward [Chapter 6].

Plate 18. First outside performance *(pidanegu)* of three *kāhāḥ* players belonging to the Gathu caste of Theco village, after tuition apprenticeship. This long *kāhāḥ* trumpet is played locally during Mwaḥani (Dasaī), the main festival *(mū jātrā)* of the village (Thīlā Punhī), funeral processions, as well as during the full moon of Bhādra (Yēnyāḥ Punhī). This photograph was taken just before the main festival of Theco. [Chapter 6].

Plate 19. A typical Balāmi house in Hompudol village, near Chitlang (April 2000) [Chapter 7].

Plate 20. Balāmi women from Hompudol carrying fire-wood, April 2000 [Chapter 7].

5

Inter-Caste Relationships in and around a Newar Village

Although introverted in many respects, the village of Pyangaon presented and analysed in the previous chapter does not form an autonomous unit. Far from being closed off at its limits, it is connected to the neighbouring settlements and the world beyond by a series of administrative, economic and religious links. During the Rana Period (1846-1951), Pyangaon was part of an administrative unit, called a *thūm*, that encompassed about ten neighbouring villages. Its headquarters were located in Chapagaon and the headmen of the villages it covered were placed under the authority of the dignitary of this small town. Even today Pyangaon is included in the Village Development Committee (VDC) of Chapagaon as its Ward No. 5. It relies on this Committee and on the Lalitpur district authorities for its budget and development plans. The Chapagaon police post also covers Pyangaon and is used by the inhabitants of this and all the surrounding villages in cases of violence and drunken brawls.[1]

From an economic viewpoint as well, the community investigated

---

Based on 'Inter-caste Relations in a Newar Community', in *Himalayan Anthropology*, edited by J.F. Fisher, Mouton, The Hague and Paris, 1978, pp. 461-81. This article has been completely rewritten for this publication, with several corrections and additions.

1 Alcoholism has always been a severe problem in Pyangaon, not only during festivals, but at other times as well. I have the feeling that Swāgumi men consume a much larger quantity of beer and hard liquor than do men in other Jyāpu villages.

has never been isolated and self-sufficient. As we saw earlier, the villagers formerly bartered bamboo measure-boxes against cereals all over the Kathmandu Valley. Up to the present day, they work as carpenters and bricklayers at various construction sites all over Lalitpur District. The Swãgumi are known to purchase a minimum of goods from the outside, but they do buy salt, cigarettes, sugar, molasses, tobacco, cloth, some spices, and various other commodities from the nearby bazaar. Every year, from December to March, they barter their mustard seeds with the oil pressers of Theco who, in this village as in Khokana, belong to the Jyāpu caste. On this occasion, a few other products are exchanged or bought, especially vegetables—for instance, *bakulāḥ* (Lat. *Vicia faba*)—that are not grown in Pyangaon. As a rule, however, the Swãgumi farmers tend to have economic ties with the towns, especially Chapagaon, rather than with nearby agricultural settlements. Thus, they sell part of their rice produce to some Chapagaon merchants (Śreṣṭha by caste) whom they trust. Milk as well is sold in great quantities in the bazaar of this small town and in other urban centres. At the time of my fieldwork in 1971-72, the supply of wood from the rare local forested areas did not meet village needs. Wood was, therefore, bought regularly from the Tamang and the Pahari (Pahi) living further south, on the fringes of the Valley.

Furthermore, Swãgumis worship a number of deities located beyond their village and are connected to wider, religiously defined territories. The Tantric goddess Vajravārāhī, whose temple is situated in a sacred forest near Chapagaon, is of paramount importance to them. This deity protects a number of adjoining Newar and non-Newar villages in addition to Pyangaon, and the Swãgumi worship her every Saturday. As we saw in the last chapter, they are also used to offering the goddess *pūjā* for four days after every important domestic and communal ritual. The involvement of small groups of Pyangaon inhabitants in the main Chapagaon festivals, especially the major one dedicated to Vajravārāhī that takes place in the autumn, is also worth mentioning.[2] In contrast, very few outsiders participate in the Pyangaon festival in honour of Nikuncā Mahādyaḥ (Chapter 4).

At the district level, which corresponds more or less to the geographical extension of the former Malla kingdom of Lalitpur, the Swãgumi often worship Rāto Matsyendranāth, known locally by its Newar name,

2 On this important festival, see S. Manandhar (1987).

Bũgadyaḥ, or by the colloquial term Karnāmay (from the Sanskrit Karuṇāmaya). This deity, residing alternately in Lalitpur town and in the village of Bungamati, is revered by all Jyāpu agriculturists of the region not only as a rain-maker but also as the god who, in times long past, introduced rice to the Kathmandu Valley. Pyangaon's men and women have three optional *guthi* associations whose function is to propitiate this deity. The first one, *sālhu guthi*, worships Bũgadyaḥ monthly—on the first day of the month by the lunar calendar, during the dark fortnight. The second association, the *jwalu guthi*, conducts rituals once a year, when the god comes back from Lalitpur to Bungamati. Lastly, the *lasu guthi* gathers when the deity makes its way from Bungamati to Lalitpur. On each occasion, a *pūjā* is collectively offered to the god. All participants partake of a concluding feast on the precincts of Bũgadyaḥ's temple, either in Laliptur or in Bungamati.

In this chapter we intend to examine the relations between the inhabitants of Pyangaon village and the main castes with whom they come into contact. The subject relates to the position of the Swãgumi within the overall caste structure. The farmers of this village indeed assume the role and function of a local dominant caste. It also relates to the so-called *jajmānī* system, defined as the customary and, for the most part, inherited links between a particular influential agrarian caste and the various service castes compelled to perform ritual services in exchange for shares of the cereal produce of their patrons, or *jajmān* (New. *jemān)*. As is known, this system of exchanging services and labour for food exists across the rural areas of the Indian subcontinent and is anchored in the Hindu caste hierarchy. *Jajmān* is derived from the Sanskrit word *yajamāna*, which refers to the maker of a sacrifice or offerings to deities, or the person who organises and pays for the ritual, the benefit of which goes directly to him. The religious connotation intrinsic to this hierarchical model is thus apparent.

The language of hierarchy: Pure and impure castes

The Jyāpu farmers of Pyangaon use the language of hierarchy familiar to Newars elsewhere to describe their relations with others castes. They divide this ethnic group into two classes: the *jyūpīṃ,* short form for *laḥ calay jyūpīṃ*, or persons from whom water can be accepted; and the *majyūpīṃ*, or *laḥ calay majyūpīṃ*, persons from whom water cannot be accepted. This is a basic opposition; it divides the whole of Newar society into pure and impure castes. The division is similar to the one exist-

ing among the Nepali Parbatiyā castes between *pāni calne jāt* and *pāni nacalne jāt*, castes with whom water can be shared and those with whom it cannot.

The *jyūpīṃ*

The list of pure castes I collected in Pyangaon always included the following: first, at the top of the hierarchy, we find the Barmhū or Brahmū (Hindu Brāhmaṇ priests) and the Gubhāju (Buddhist priests). Both are addressed by the word *guruju* and for short can be called *bhāju*, an honorific derived from the Sanskrit *bhadralok* and used in the sense of 'gentleman'. The Barmhū is usually called *dyaḥ bhāju* (from *dyaḥ* which means 'god'). Then, in the following order, we have: the Bare (goldsmiths), the Śreṣṭha (merchants), the Jyāpu (farmers), the Pahi or Pahari (basket-makers), the Sāymi (oil-pressers), the Nau (barbers), the Citrakār or Pūṃ (painters), the Kau (blacksmiths) and the Bhā (funeral specialists). Some people, but not all, add to this list the Udās (Buddhist merchants and craftsmen) and the Gathu (gardeners and dancers), giving the former a higher status and the latter a lower one. This list, relatively short, is not meant to be a complete catalogue of the Newar castes, but names the ones most frequently mentioned by these rural peasants. It is, therefore, fitting that it should not include the names of castes with which the Swāgumi do not have any contact and which do not exist in the VDC—or, earlier, panchayat—of Chapagaon.

What enables the Swāgumi of Pyangaon to situate themselves in relation to any one of the above castes? Four main criteria, all related to daily life, can be named: cooked food, marriage, access to the different floors of the house and the hookah water pipe. As will be shown, the ranking of castes is clearly seen in these commensal rules of eating, marrying, entering houses and smoking.

Cooked food is the most important criterion. It can be used on its own to establish a hierarchy among castes. Cooked food in this context means boiled rice (New. *jā)*. This item is particularly prone to the threat of pollution and is subjected to extremely strict prohibitions. It is the pre-eminent food and the most likely one to be defiled, and thus must be prepared with the greatest care; it will be polluted if a lower-caste person even looks at it. Cooked rice is almost always consumed in a closed space—usually in the kitchen, located on the top floor of the house—in complete silence. According to caste rules, *jā* is associated with lentils or other pulses, which is normally served with it in soup form at meals. The

black gram (Lat. *Phaseolus mungo)* soup, *māy keṃ*, in particular, has a very high ritual status, equal, in fact, to boiled rice.[3] Both items can only be eaten if cooked by someone of a superior (and sometimes equal) caste. In principle, they cannot be shared with persons outside the status group. The first question asked of someone in order to situate him or her in the caste hierarchy will be: 'Do you accept rice cooked by such and such a caste?' The Jyāpu of Pyangaon, for instance, will not accept rice cooked by any of the castes they consider lower than themselves: the Pahi, the Sāymi, the Nau, and so on. On the other hand, they will accept rice cooked by the Śreṣṭha, the Bare (Śākya), the Gubhāju, the Barmhū, and other higher castes. Inversely, in order to retain their place at the top of the hierarchy, the Gubhāju and the Barmhū priests will not accept rice cooked by a lower caste, including, of course, the Jyāpu.

The flattened rice (New. *baji*, Nep. *ciurā)* which is eaten at midday—very often in the field—with some vegetables and rice-beer, represents a different and interesting case. Although these rice flakes are first parboiled, then grilled for a few minutes before being crushed in a mortar, they can theoretically be accepted from everyone within the category of pure castes. Why is this item deemed to be safer? The Swāgumi explain that the husk enclosing the grain during boiling protects the rice from becoming polluted. This is why flattened rice is the food reserved for feasts and ceremonial occasions, when food is usually taken in open places, and sometimes in an inter-caste context.

Matters relating to cooked food are sometimes not sufficient to determine a group's position in the hierarchy. Other criteria, especially marriage, must be taken into account. The Jyāpu farmers of Lalitpur, for instance, often say that they will not marry Kathmandu peasants because the latter are, according to them, used to marrying Sāymini, or oil-presser women, a caste of low status.[4] For the Lalitpur Jyāpus such a union would be followed immediately by excommunication from their caste group. It is well known that though the Buddhist priests, or Gubhājus, sometimes accept rice cooked by the Bare, these groups do not systematically inter-

3 This black lentil has high religious value. Among many Newar castes, its consumption is forbidden during the period of mourning.

4 Though these two groups have close contacts in the capital, inter-caste marriages between Jyāpu men of Kathmandu and Sāymi women are extremely rare and always denigrated. The Lalitpur farmers are perhaps referring to the offspring of such marriages. It is not impossible that in some limited cases, and on the very long term, the descendants of such unions retain their Jyāpu status.

marry (Nepali 1965: 153). Caste endogamy is a means here of acquiring slight superiority over or disputing the equality of another caste. Marriage with a person of another caste automatically entails a drop in the hierarchy, even if the woman belongs to a higher group. The situation in Pyangaon is precisely like this: as discussed previously, the whole village is almost entirely endogamous. In theory, the Swãgumi, whether men or women, do not marry outside the community. If they do so, they can be expelled from their kinship units and *guthi* associations, and marginalised in village religious life.

As in the case of marriage, access to the different floors of the house is dictated by caste rules. Each floor represents a certain degree of purity and impurity, establishing a hierarchy between social groups. Pure castes of a status lower than the Swãgumi (such as the Sãymi, Pahi and Nau) are only admitted to the first floor, called *mãtã* in Newar. If they have to be fed, they will be fed on this floor. There are some exceptions, however: the barber, who is well known and lives very close to the village, is often allowed to go up to the second floor. If he does, though, he will stay as close as possible to the stairwell and, in some cases, he will stay on the steps.

The Śreṣṭha, the Bare, and all castes equal to or higher than the Swãgumi are received on the second floor of the house (New. *cwatã).* They will eat in this room if they are offered a meal. However, they will not be allowed to enter the kitchen, which is almost always on the top floor, under the rafters. Only Pyangaon villagers (but not persons with whom the householders are on bad terms) are allowed into the kitchen (New. *baigaḥ).* Even the Jyãpu of neighbouring villages are not allowed in. Outsiders with whom regular relations are maintained may on occasion be allowed to infringe upon this rule, but only if no rice is being cooked.

A final criterion is the smoking of the hookah (New. *hukã*). In Pyangaon, only fellow-villagers may share a complete hookah. If the pipe is to be smoked with a Jyãpu from a neighbouring village, the stem is removed and the other person has to smoke directly from the base of the pipe. When a *hukã* is smoked with a Śreṣṭha or a barber, all the parts are removed and only the bow *(cilã)* is presented. Persons belonging to much higher castes, such as Buddhist and Hindu priests, insert a leaf between their mouths and the lower orifice of the bowl. The Kathmandu Śreṣṭha—especially the Rãjbhandãrī—use the same method when smoking with Pyangaon villagers. The hookah is therefore another way of

classifying people within a system. Each of the pipe's parts represents a degree of social distance. The water pipe in its entirety mirrors the overall hierarchy and enacts the series of hierarchical relationships that tie the groups together. This parameter for determining caste status is especially important in societies where, as in Pyangaon in the 1970s, every man in the village smokes. Hardly any man could pass a group in the village or the fields without being asked to sit down and smoke a while.

The *majyūpīṃ*

Who are the *majyūpīṃ*, 'the persons from whom water cannot be accepted'? The 1854 Muluki Ain (Law of the Country) gives the following list of impure: the Kasāī (butchers, milk merchants), the Kusle (musicians, tailors), the Kulu (leather dressers, shoe and drum-makers), the Poḍe (fishermen), and the Cyāmakhalak (scavengers) (see Macdonald 1975: 281-295). Sylvain Lévi, reproducing the list of Henry Oldfield's (1880), mentions eight Ṇewar castes 'underneath the waterline': the Kasāī, the Jugi, the Dhunt (feast musicians), the Dhauwi (coke-makers), the Kulu (or Kullu), the Poḍe (Podhya), the Cyāmakhalak (Chamakallak, skin-dressers and sweepers) and the Sāghat (Sanghar or Songat, launderers) (Lévi 1905, ii: 244). Gopal Singh Nepali lists the Kasāī, the Kusle (or Jogi), the Poḍe (Pore), the Kulu, the Cyāmkhalak, and the Hārāhuru, as well as, mistakenly, the Dwīṃ (or 'Dun yeeya': 'they earn their livelihood as workers in stone quarries and by selling firewood and red soil'), the Balāmi, and the Bhāḥ (1965: 174).

In my book *Society and Religion among the Newars of Nepal* (1984: 231), the following castes are listed as impure: Nāy (Khaḍgī), Jugi or Kusle (Kāpālī), Doṃ (Bādikār), Kulu, Dhobi (Rājaka), Poḍe (Dyaḥlā), Cyāmkhalaḥ or Cyāme (Kucikār), Hārā-Huru. The name in brackets refers to the honorific by which such groups are expected to be called nowadays. In Pyangaon, I collected the following list at the time of my fieldwork in the early 1970s: Nāy (Khaḍgī), Kulu, Jugi, Doṃ (Dwā), Pwaḥ (Poḍe), and Cyāmkhalaḥ. All these impure castes are in one way or another connected with dead things or bodily emissions, which are considered to cause serious pollution.

According to the 19th-century Muluki Ain, a distinction must be made between persons from whom water cannot be accepted but contact with whom does not require purification by sprinkling of water, and those from whom water cannot be accepted and contact with whom does require purification by sprinkling (Macdonald 1975: 282-285). The first

category includes the Kasāī, the Kusle and the Kulu. The second consists of the Poḍe and the Cyāmakhalaḥ (idem: 145-146). This distinction still exists among most of the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley. Though it continues to hold in the minds of the Hindu and Buddhist high castes,[5] the issue is not as clear as it is among the pure castes of lower rank.

Pyangaon peasants, especially the elders, or *thakāli*, use this distinction quite clearly. They distinguish two groups within impure castes: those who can be touched, *ti jyūpīṃ*, and those who cannot be touched, *ti majyūpīṃ*. The first group includes the butcher Khaḍgī and the musician-tailor Jugi, and the second the Poḍe (Pwaḥ) and the Cyāmkhalaḥ. The status of the Doṃ is disputed. Some class them in the first category, others in the second. The clans' headmen, the musicians' teachers or *guru*, the *ācāḥju* local priests and other dignitaries—that is, the village's *sapīṃ*, 'the persons who know'—unambiguously declare that touching persons of the last two (or three) castes entails pollution that has to be removed by sprinkling water over the head.

The members of these extremely low castes, with the exception of the butcher, are also not allowed to enter the house of Swãgumi. In addition, if a person belonging to one of these castes touches a brass receptacle, it has to be purified by scrubbing it with ash and rinsing it with water. If the receptacle is an earthenware object, it has to be broken. Despite of these restrictions, the untouchable castes can walk freely in all parts of the village, except for near the drinking water sources. For their part, when asked about the issue of pollution by touching, the juniors and most of the women confess their ignorance. They simply say, as in many other cases when asked about religious matters: *masyu*, 'I don't know.' All seem to agree, though, that the Cyāmkhalaḥ rank lowest in the caste system.

It should be noted that if a man belonging to a pure caste marries a *majyūmha* girl, he will himself immediately become an 'untouchable'. Besides, a man may not have sexual intercourse with a woman belonging to one of these castes without payment of a fine.[6] Theoretically, no food can be accepted from these groups. But it seems that non-boiled

5 According to Nepali (1965: 190), this purification 'consists of sprinkling over the polluted person some water in which a piece of gold has been dipped'.

6 The Muluki Ain gives a lot of information on this matter: in the case of a woman's adultery with a man from whom water is not accepted, but with whom contact does not require purification by sprinkling of water, the husband can demand fifteen rupees from his wife's lover. In the event of adultery with a man from whom water is not accepted and with whom contact requires

food can be accepted in some festive contexts from the hands of the butcher caste. Finally, a hookah may not be shared with a *majyūmha*.

Position of the Swāgumi within the Newar caste system

As recounted in Chapter 4, the Swāgumi of Pyangaon form a separate status group in themselves. They claim to be Jyāpu and to be affiliated to this large agriculturalist caste. They sometimes even assert a superior status due to their semi-royal origins.[7] This claim is denied by other Jyāpus of the vicinity, from Theco or Bulu, for example. These farmers invariably consider the Pyangaon inhabitants to be a lower sub-group. They refuse to marry Swāgumi women and do not accept rice cooked by them. In hierarchical terms, the status of the Pyangaon population can thus be defined as follows: the farmers of the neighbouring communities treat them as a lower-ranking Jyāpu group. The Pyangaon agriculturists, for their part, feel that they are higher in rank than the Jyāpu of the neighbouring villages.

It must be stressed that such a contested situation is not uncommon in the Newar caste system, a very complex one when compared to the simpler Parbatiyā hierarchy. Many groups claim to occupy a position higher than or equal to the caste ranking just above in the hierarchy. To justify such claims, all sorts of arguments are valid, especially historical or legendary events. Sometimes great pains are taken to observe Brāhmaṇ rules as strictly as possible, and thus to follow a well-known process of Sanskritisation. One Jyāpu sub-section will thus be treated as lower ranking because it eats or its ancestors used to eat boar's meat. Another group will refuse to give its daughters in marriage to other peasants because its own members are the servants of an important and prestigious divinity, and so they develop a sense of superiority due to this position.

It is particularly difficult, in these circumstances, to appreciate objec-

purification by sprinkling of water, he can demand ten rupees plus a fine of five rupees from his wife's lover; cf. Macdonald (1975: 283). Gaborieau (1972: 98), for his part, notes that 'sexual relations with a woman of an impure though not untouchable caste are not permitted; up to 1963, they constituted an offence *(rājkhat)* punishable by the tribunal. If the guilty man has taken neither food nor water from the hands of the woman, he had to pay a fine *(ḍaṇḍ)* and undergo a penance *(prāyaścitta)*; but if he had taken food or water from her, he was degraded and integrated into her caste'.

7 For a long time now some Pyangaon farmers have been calling themselves Singh (or Siṃha), an honorific title adopted by the upper stratum of the Jyāpu caste. This prestigious name has also been adopted in Kathmandu by some peasants who want to be set apart from ordinary Jyāpu.

tively and entirely the position of two groups involved in a quarrel. Too many criteria are taken into account; they acquire meaning only if considered from a particular point of view. And, of course, a different hierarchy is obtained if the case is observed from the point of view of another caste. Even between Brāhmaṇs and Buddhist Vajrācāryas (or Gubhāju priests), ranking is disputed. The contradictions do not seem to bother the persons concerned. To give a static picture of the Newar caste system ignores the fact that these disputes play an essential part in that system.

No canonical text exists which gives a clear hierarchical order of the numerous Newar castes situated between, on the one hand, the high Hindu and Buddhist Newar castes such as the Chatharīya and the Śreṣṭha, and, on the other hand, the impure *majyūpīṃ* castes. Even the 1854 Muluki Ain does not go through these complex matters. This code is rather aimed at situating the Newars as a whole within Nepali society, by giving a definitive position to their Brāhmaṇs and by listing their impure castes. Among the Newar themselves, the only widely known criterion is that no one other than Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs and Chatharīya—and some Śreṣṭhas—are entitled to wear the Hindu sacred thread, or *janai*. The Swāgumi of Pyangaon speak of *taḥjāt* (Nep. *ṭhulo jāt)* 'high castes', or *thaḥpīṃ*, 'high-ranking persons', to designate families that wear the *janai*.

It is important to consider what the Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ say on this subject. They are, after all, the religious authority on caste matters within Newar society. Interestingly, these Brāhmaṇs have a very clear view of the whole society of Newars, Hindu as well as Buddhist. They have established a series of criteria related to the relative purity of the intermediate castes. The main argument they have developed concerns the use of different ritual specialists in order to remove pollution or mark an auspicious event. According to them, the castes that have a barber woman cut their toes-nails (New. *lusi dhenegu)* at life-cycle rituals are superior to castes that have a butcher woman (inferior in status to the barber) carry out this task. The first group mainly consists of the Jyāpu; the second comprises a great number of castes situated below the Jyāpu farmers, such as the Gathu, Bhāḥ, Citrakār painters, Mānandhar oil-pressers, Kau blacksmiths and Chipā dyers. As we shall see, the Swāgumi belong unambiguously to the first group.

The Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ also sometimes note the cutting of the umbilical cord at the time of the delivery as an important factor. In Lalitpur District, there is no specialist of a relatively high caste to carry out this

task, like the Kataḥ in Bhaktapur District (Toffin 1984: 279). Traditionally, most people belonging to intermediate castes call upon a butcher woman to do the job. This is considered a ritual act and it is accompanied by a ceremony. For both parties, the butcher woman and the family of the woman giving birth, this job is an obligation, a duty, to which the butcher woman is accountable from ancient times due to her caste. Theoretically, the Swãgumi, as the Jyãpu of the vicinity and of old Kathmandu city, mostly call upon butcher women on these occasions (see below).

I repeatedly came across a related distinction among several groups of Newars. Only the highest castes have the right to employ the services of butchers, or Nãy, to carry the palanquin (New. *dū)* from the bride's house to the groom's during a wedding ceremony. If members of other castes use a palanquin at a wedding, they will carry it themselves.

The Swãgumi, however, find it hard to grasp these complex norms connected to caste hierarchy. The inhabitants of Pyangaon, for the most part, keep quiet about these discussions. They are aware of the habits of the Jyãpu living in neighbouring localities, but they maintain complete ignorance as to which specialists the other Newar castes call upon for their life-cycle rituals.

Inter-caste relations with the higher castes, *thaḥpīṃ*

The priests

The four Hindu clans of Pyangaon call on the services of Brãhmaṇ Hindu priests (Barmhū), and the Buddhist minority on Buddhist sacerdotal specialists (Gubhãju) on some rare occasions. The former come either from the Rãjopãdhyãya Newar community of Laliptur town, or from Tahakhel, a Parbatiyã village only a few minutes' walk from Pyangaon. The Gubhãju used by the villagers live mostly in Chapagaon, but some of them come from Lalitpur. The Barmhū and the Gubhãju hold the highest place in the Newar caste hierarchy. When they enter the Jyãpu's house, they are given the place of honour on the second floor, in the front part of the room—that is, on the façade side, which opens on to the street. The Swãgumi bow down before them. When they make offerings, the villagers stand slightly behind them and play the part of a servant. Through their knowledge of the complex rituals, not understood by most local peasants, the priests impose respect and deference. The Barmhū and the Gubhãju do not accept rice cooked by the inhabitants of Pyangaon; when they are fed, it is always with flattened rice.

These priests come to Pyangaon mainly for death ceremonies. The

Gubhāju is called upon by the Wosikār at nearly every important funeral rite: the *ghaḥsū* purification ceremony celebrated on the seventh day after the cremation; the *dakilā* (or *tithi śrāddha)*, one year after the death, and other subsequent *śrāddhas*, when *piṇḍas*, mixed flour balls (New. *pyã)*, are offered to the deceased person. The Hindu clans call upon Brāhmaṇs only for the *tithi śrāddha* (or *dakilā)*, the *śrāddha* rites (New. *pyã thayegu)* in honour and for the benefit of deceased ancestors, which is held on the anniversary of their death; and for the *sora śrāddha*, a funeral ceremony systematically and collectively held in the main street of the village every year on the sixth day of the month of Āśvin, during the dark fortnight, at the end of the Indra Jātrā festival. For these two ceremonies, a Karmācārya Newar Tantric priest and a Jośī Newar astrologer are also supposed to come and conduct the ritual along with the Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ. As is known, these two additional priests belong to high Hindu castes included in the Chatharīya aristocratic block of families. These ritual specialists, acting as assistants to the Brāhmaṇ, come less and less to Pyangaon, even when called. Nowadays, the Swāgumi just send them a portion of the feast after the rituals.

For all other funeral rites, including the *ghaḥsū* purification ceremony which they perform on the thirteenth day after the funerals, the four Hindu clans call upon their own *ācāḥju* priests (Chapter 4). These local Tantric priests, who are normally first initiated by Karmācārya priests, have thus tremendous importance in the community from a religious viewpoint. They know enough magical spells, mantras, and esoteric positions of the hands, or *mudrās*, to perform rituals on their own. As far as the other rites of passage (birth, initiation and marriage) are concerned, they are conducted exclusively by local specialists: either the clan headman, or *thakāli*, or the *ācāḥju* Hindu Tantric priests. The latter are especially called upon when the clan deity, *digudyaḥ*, has to be worshipped, which is the case during the loin-cloth presentation ceremony for young boys, *kaytā pūjā,* and the seclusion period of twelve days, *bārāy tayegu,* that girls have to undergo at puberty (Toffin 1984: 134-141). Sometimes, these two persons jointly direct the rituals. The wife of the clan headman (New. *nakīṃ)* usually conducts the rites of passage related to young children, both male and female, by herself.

Brāhmaṇ priests are also needed to perform the Satya Nārāyaṇ pūjā subsequent to a violent death or to pacify specific evil spirits. In such cases, a Parbatiyā Bāhun from the nearby village of Taukhel is summoned. Twice a week during the month of Āśvin (between September

and October) a Barmhū from Lalitpur comes to read excerpts from the epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in Newar. The reading takes place at about five or six in the evening in the village street. A local *guthi* association gives the priest and his assistant a few measures *(pāthī)* of paddy rice and wheat as payment. The story-teller's young assistant sanctifies the listeners with red *ṭikā* paste. If the temple of the Nikuncā Mahādyaḥ *āgādyaḥ* is polluted, a Newar Brāhmaṇ is asked to ritually purify it. Finally, it can be mentioned in this connection that the services of a Buddhist Gubhāju priest are needed to celebrate foundation and consecration rites whenever a *cībhāḥ* (a small stūpa-shaped religious building) is constructed in the locality.

The Brāhmaṇ or Buddhist priest *(guruju* or *purohit)* and his client are linked by a strong bond. The Swāgumi farmers must always call upon the same priest, and in the event of his death must choose a successor from within his family. The obligation to call on the services of a particular priest is transmitted from father to son. For the Hindu families of Pyangaon, this rule is rather important; the number of possible Brāhmaṇ priests from Lalitpur is quite limited due to the caste's very small population.

When the Hindu priest came to Pyangaon to celebrate the *śrāddha* rites in 1972, he would get nine *mānā* measures of husked rice and six rupees as his religious fees, or *dakṣiṇā*. The Barmhū can also ask his client to hoe his fields twice a year. This task is performed within a *guthi* association integrated with the local clan structure. To celebrate the *śrāddha* rites, the Buddhist Gubhāju is given seven to ten *mānā* of husked rice, two to three *mānā* of flattened rice, and a few rupees. In both cases, villagers used to send some food to their priest during important festivals.

A Jośī Newar astrologer from Lalitpur is occasionally consulted to establish the horoscope of a new-born child.

The merchants

According to the census undertaken by Colin Rosser in the 1960s, Śreṣṭha merchants account for 21.4 per cent of the total Newar population of the Kathmandu Valley (1966: 86). They represent a dynamic and enterprising group, controlling most trade in the Valley and occupying a number of positions in administration. Śreṣṭha (or Śeśyaḥ) form an important part of the population of the nearby town of Chapagaon, which prides itself in its large bazaar. The Swāgumi of Pyangaon do a lot of trading with

them. In the shops of Chapagaon's merchants, they buy manufactured goods imported from China and India, or processed in Nepal, including scissors, mirrors, soap, matches, cigarettes and batteries. In the 1970s, they also sold to them every morning and evening the milk from their buffaloes and sold through them part of their wheat harvest. In addition, some Pyangaon farmers till the land of Śreṣṭha families inhabiting Chapagaon.

In the caste hierarchy, the Śreṣṭha rank much higher than the Jyāpu.[8] To mark this superior status, the former do not accept rice cooked by the Jyāpu or Swāgumi, whereas the latter have to accept rice cooked by the Śreṣṭha. The Śreṣṭha are supposed to be 'more pure' than the farmers, because, among other things, they celebrate more ceremonies and observe more rites of purification and because events such as births and deaths defile them for longer periods of time than they do Jyāpu agriculturists. The Śreṣṭha have much closer contact with the Brāhmaṇ priests, the purest people in the overall hierarchy. They also belong more firmly to the mainstream Hindu cultural world than do the Jyāpu.

In the specific local context under consideration, the relationships between Swāgumi and Śreṣṭha also involve an opposition between literate and illiterate groups, as well as between townspeople and peasants. The Śreṣṭha of Chapagaon usually behave in a manner urban and polite compared to the people of Pyangaon. In 1972, the men of the former at least could all read and write, whereas the Pyangaon Jyāpu were still nearly all illiterate. For most of the villagers in the area, the Śreṣṭha merchants belong to the group of people called *sapīṃ*, 'the persons who know', while themselves, 'they don't know' *(masapīṃ)*, except some elders and local Tantric priests. These two groups are opposed in all aspects of clothing and in many food habits. The Śreṣṭha are thoroughly townspeople, even if some of them live in rural areas, such as the nearby village of Bulu. Their political, administrative, and economic successes originate in towns and trading. They look down on farming and farmers, and to them, the village of Pyangaon is the ultimate in barbarity because all its inhabitants are farmers. They point to the extremely dirty houses of the Swāgumi and their heavily mended clothes. The Pyangaon villagers are nicknamed 'monkey' or *jaṃgali* (from the 'jungle') after their

8 The Swāgumi of Pyangaon do not differentiate between Chatharīya groups, of Kṣatriya status, and Śreṣṭha families, as do people of many other Newar villages. For the example of Panauti, cf. Toffin (1984: 380-382). In this locality, Śreṣṭha are ranked clearly below the Chatharīya.

expeditions into the Tarai forest in search of the bamboo needed to make the *pyāṅg* measuring boxes.

Inter-caste relations with the lower castes, *kwa jāt*

Five lower castes (New. *kwa jāt*) have important economic and ritual links with the inhabitants of Pyangaon: one from which water is accepted (the barbers) and four from which water is not accepted (the Jugi or Jogi musicians, the butchers, the Doṃ musicians, and the Kāmī blacksmiths belonging to the Parbatiyā community). The Swāgumi also come into contact with Bhāḥ (Kārāmjit) at funerals and, on very rare occasions linked also with death, with Poḍe (Dyaḥlā) fishermen.

The barber, Nau *or* Nāpit

About 120 metres northwest of the village, along the main route leading to Chapagaon, there is a small one-storey house with a thatched roof. This is where the Newar barber officiating for all the Swāgumi peasants lived with his wife and two children at the time of my fieldwork in 1971-72. During this time, the barber's patrons also included 13 families in the nearby village of Bulu.

As his house is so close to the village, the Nau (Nāpit) barber is very much involved in the life of Pyangaon. The Swāgumi come to visit him and spend a lot of time chatting with him on his doorstep. The barber frequently goes to his clients' houses to discuss the date and time of a specific purification ceremony, or to claim a sum of money or a quantity of grain in exchange for his services. His son and daughter go to the village school and play freely with the young Pyangaon peasants. The community's elders, however, refuse to consider the barber a full member of the village. The Nau does not participate in the public and administrative life of Pyangaon and is not given any part in community decision-making. In this one-caste village, the barber is treated as a stranger. He is not of the same origin as the other inhabitants; he does not speak the same dialect; he does not work in the fields; his wife does not wear the red-edged, black Jyāpuni wraparound. As such, he does not have much in common with the Pyangaon farmers.

Relations with the barber are marked by caste prohibitions. The rice he has cooked is not accepted. No intermarriage is allowed between his children and the Swāgumi. If the barber sits with a group of villagers and they are smoking a hookah together, the farmers will only offer him the bowl of the water pipe, without the other parts. The rules about access to

the house are more flexible as the Nau belongs to a pure caste and is well known in the locality. In theory, it is only tolerated for the barber to go up to the first floor, but nearly all the villagers let him go up to the second floor.

The Nau has very important functions from a religious viewpoint. His services as well as those of his wife are crucial for the life of the community. Both are called on for all ceremonies marking the rites of passage (birth, initiation, marriage and funeral). By shaving the heads of their clients and by cutting their toe-nails, *lusi dhenegu*, this couple removes the impurities attached to their persons on these occasions. Nau women also paint the toes of men and women red to celebrate the auspiciousness of happy events, such as initiation ceremonies, weddings, and so on.

The Nau is mainly a purifier. At the time of birth, he has to shave the head of the newborn baby's father with his razor. At the *kaytā pūjā*, the male initiation rite, he has to shave the head of the initiate, leaving just a tuft of hair at the top. This is the first time that the child or the adolescent has his head shaved by the barber; previously, his mother would have cut his hair with a pair of scissors. In most cases, the barber cuts only a small lock of hair, and the maternal uncle of the boy cuts the rest. Through this initiation, the barber acquires a new client. At the ritual of female confinement, *bārāy tayegu*, which entails pollution for the secluded young women, the barber's wife cuts the toe-nails and paints the feet of the young women and of their mothers with red dye. This collective ceremony takes place on the twelfth day of the *bārāy* when the confined girls come out after eleven days of confinement and 'look at the sun'. At a wedding, the barber's wife cuts the bride's toe-nails and paints her feet with red dye. Finally, at the purification ceremony following funerals (New. *ghaḥsū)*, the barber shaves the heads of the dead man's sons. He also shaves their beards and eyebrows. His wife touches the toes of the polluted relatives with the blade of her stylet to remove pollution, an act called *lusi thikegu*. The same operations sometimes take place at the rituals celebrated 45 days *(lātyā)* and six months *(khulā)* after cremation.

How is the barber paid? The Nau has no field, just a little garden in front of his house where he grows a few vegetables and spices. He is entirely dependent on his clients for his food and survival. The peasants provide for his needs as follows: each household is required to give him a certain quantity of grain three times a year, upon the harvests of wheat, corn, and irrigated rice. This payment is called *bāli*, literally, 'crop' in both Newar and Nepali. It varies in accordance with the client's financial

means: the poorer families, who till a small area of land and have to feed a large family, only give three to five *mānā* of grain at each of the three harvests; wealthier persons give up to one *pāthī* (eight *mānā)* of grain, making about three *pāthī* a year.

At each of the rites of passage, a number of additional payments are made. Thus, at a birth, the barber receives three to six *mānā* of flattened rice and one *pāthī* of husked rice. He is also given one share of the banquet, which must include two *mānā* of flattened rice, one *tarkāri* of meat and vegetables, and one or two cups of corn beer. At the male initiation rite, the barber is not entitled to a payment in grain; nor is he invited to the feast. He just receives, as at a birth, a share of the banquet. During female confinement, a Swāgumi family has to give the barber's family 88 *paisā* (about one rupee), an amount of religious significance in Hindu culture. In addition, if the client is wealthy, he gives seasonal vegetables and spices. At a funeral, as the peasants will say, 'We give the barber what we give him at a birth', that is to say, three to six *mānā* of flattened rice, one *pāthī* of husked rice, and a share of the banquet.

As can be seen, services on ritual occasions are paid for in kind only. It should be noted, however, that clients, except for those who have used the barber's services during the year for a birth or funeral, are required to give the barber 88 *paisā* a year. Finally, any person who has had his hair cut or his head shaved at times other than these ritual occasions, has to pay the barber one rupee.

The funeral specialist, Bhāḥ

Most of the tools—agricultural instruments in particular—owned by a deceased person and objects used by him on a daily basis, like bowls and plates, are sent to a Bhāḥ family from Chapagaon on the day after the *ghaḥsū* funeral ceremony, fourteen days after cremation.[9] As a rule, all persons receiving a dead person's belongings are of extremely low status.

9 According to Chattopadhyay (1980: 116), who borrows this definition from B.H. Hodgson, the Bhāḥ 'take the death gifts on the eleventh day and eat a bit of the corpse. They dye woollens and cotton with red colour. They should not cultivate or keep shop, but do both now'. Members of this caste were not only dyers; they also assumed the role filled in India by Mahābrāhmaṇs. In Panauti, they are still called upon by high Hindu Newar castes on the tenth day after funerals to eat a plate called *kāṭṭo* (Nep. and New), in which a piece of the skull of the dead person is said to have been mixed (Toffin 1984: 291-292) (Chapter 11). As a matter of fact, they play the role of the Parbatiyā *kāṭṭo khāne bāhun*. Nepali (1965: 172-173) classes them incorrectly among the impure castes.

The butcher, Nāy *or* Khaḍgī

Pyangaon farmers always call on the services of the same butcher family that lives in Chapagaon. When the Nāy comes to the village for feasts and ceremonies, he is received in a small room on the first floor of the house. He may not go up higher. He is not invited to smoke a hookah. He is also forbidden to walk on the lawn where the Hindu *digudyaḥ* lineage deity of the village is located. To underline his low position in the caste hierarchy, the Swāgumi say that the butcher caste breeds pigs. Pigs are very unclean and unholy animals whose flesh is never eaten by Jyāpu farmers. Pyangaon inhabitants also proclaim that the butchers, unlike the Jyāpu, are not supposed to roof their houses with tiles.[10]

Swāgumis rarely buy meat outside the village. They eat meat mostly during festive periods when animals are offered to gods. Therefore, the butcher plays a role that is more ritual than economic. When a child is born, the butcher's wife is supposed to cut the newborn baby's umbilical cord and dispose of it at the north-west entrance to the village, at the refuse place called *chwāsa*. In practice, the Nāyni (butcher woman) hardly ever comes; she is often busy at the time she is wanted, and Chapagaon is not very close to Pyangaon. When she arrives, it is often too late and she just puts the placenta and the umbilical cord in an earthen pot and throws it in the *chwāsa*. In such a situation, it is the midwife *aji*, a Jyāpuni from Pyangaon, who cuts the umbilical cord. In the days following the birth, the butcher's wife is also supposed to pierce little girls' ear lobes and little boys' ear helix if elder brothers and sisters had died when they were babies. This operation, performed with a twig of a special plant *(Gaultheria fragantissima)*, will enable the children to wear earrings in two or three years' time. But this is often done in the village itself by a woman from the family. A thread is inserted into the hole to prevent it from closing.

At the male initiation rite, *kaytā pūjā*, the butcher and his family spend the whole day in Pyangaon. After tying up the buffalo to be sacrificed to the god Gaṇeśa with the help of his sons or nephews, he cuts the animal's throat and sprinkles the altar and the initiate's nearest relatives with its blood. He then applies vermilion to the forehead of the initiated

10 Apparently, this ban has its origins in ancient times. Sylvain Lévi (1905i: 237) relates that during the reign of Jayasthiti Malla (14th century), impure castes such as the Kulu, the Kasāī and the Poḍe were forbidden to roof their houses with tiles. Today, the ban no longer applies. In Panauti, for instance, some rich butchers have splendid houses in the Rana style, see Barré *et al* (1981: 146-147).

child's father. The butcher and his wife also have to cut up the carcass of the animal and roast it over a straw fire.

Whenever a feast involves the killing of a buffalo, the Jyāpu of Pyangaon call on the butcher's services. It is considered somewhat polluting to slaughter such an animal in a ceremonial manner and only an impure caste such as the Nāy can do this. It should be noted that the Swāgumi of Pyangaon do not ask the butchers to provide music for funerals, which often happens among the Newar of higher castes (Nepali 1965: 185). Yet, the presence of Nāy musicians playing their typical *nāykhīṃ* drum is sometimes required for the cult of the local Tantric deity, Kāleśvar Mahādev. In addition, a band with western musical instruments, including trumpets, trombones and marching band-type drums is frequently hired from Chapagaon for some ceremonies, such as the *kaytā pūjā* initiation (Toffin 1984: 136). This band (called *band)* is entirely composed of butcher musicians.

The butcher is not entitled to an annual *bāli* as the barber is. He is just given some food and a few coins whenever he comes to Pyangaon. It is also customary to give him a share of meat amounting to one or two *casari*[11] when he sacrifices a buffalo. He also takes away the hoofs and other unwanted pieces of the animal. When his wife comes to cut a newborn baby's umbilical cord, she is given 88 *paisā* and one to three *mānā* of husked rice. Finally, at the male initiation ceremony, the butcher's family receives a share of the feast: beer, flattened rice, pieces of roasted meat, cooked vegetables and pulses. Musical bands are paid in cash.

The musicians, Kusle *and* Doṃ

The farmers of the Pyangaon village use two kinds of Newar musicians for their festivals and *guthi* ceremonies. The first one belongs to the Kusle caste (or Kāpālī), a former group of the Kānphaṭā Yogī. He plays the *mwāhāli* oboe, characterised by its curved tube and metal bell. The second musician belongs to the Doṃ or Dwā caste (Bādikār), a distinct but very small group, which ranks lower than the Kusle in the Newar caste hierarchy.[12] He plays a special barrel-shaped drum called a *ḍholak* in Nepali (New. *dhwalak).* Both are impure castes but, in principle, not

11 *Casari* is a measurement of weight used with the local steelyard weighing machine and amounts to about 1.2 kilograms. This machine, made entirely out of wood, is called *hāmu* in local Newar and *tulā* in Nepali.

12 The 1854 Muluki Ain mentions them in association with the leather-working and drum-making Kulu (Gellner 1995*b*: 282-283). According to Bouillier (1993: 77), Doṃs are a lower-

untouchable. For the Swãgumi, however, the status of the Doṃ is disputable. As previously stated, some of them consider Doṃ untouchable, *ti majyūpīṃ*, and claim that their contact requires purification. Perhaps this is due to the fact they bear the same name as the Doṃ of India, musicians by caste as well, and distinctively untouchable. In fact, in everyday life nobody bothers about being touched by the oboist. Kusle and Doṃ do not intermarry and do not accept rice cooked by each other.

Pyangaon peasants never share the same hookah with these impure castes. Like the butchers, these musicians breed pigs, and are not allowed to roof their houses with tiles; they can only use thatch. Moreover, whereas the butcher is allowed to enter the house of the Swãgumi, Kusle and Doṃ musicians are denied access to the inside of the house. In the open air—for instance, at a ceremonial banquet—the villagers keep the water-filled jars at a respectable distance from them.

The Kusle and Doṃ are exclusively called upon for ritual purposes. They generally come together, the first from Chapagaon, the second from Lalitpur. During my 1971-72 fieldwork, the same two persons used to play music all year long. These musicians come for nearly all important collective festivals. It would be too much to enumerate all of them, but Indra Jātrā, Mwaḥni (Dasaĩ), Gathāmugaḥ, Phāgu Punhī, the month of Gũṃlā as far as the Buddhist clan of Pyangaon is concerned, may be mentioned. At the end of the rainy season in Bhādra (August-September), a period during which the year's biggest local festival is held, they stay in the village nearly all day long. During this festival in honour of Kāleśvar Mahādev, which falls during Indra Jātrā, the two musicians stand slightly aside from the Swãgumi musicians and the elders, whether on stage, underneath a shelter, or in the street. In addition to these festivals, they come to Pyangaon to play music during domestic events, especially the male initiation ceremony, where their presence is needed at the time of sacrifice. At ceremonial banquets held in the open air, they eat at a respectable distance from the guests. They are served last.

The drummer and oboe player are entitled to an annual *bāli*. But it is much smaller than the barber's: they receive only four to six *mānā* of grain per house. Some people pay them in cash: two to five rupees, depending on what they can afford. For the largest ceremonies, Indra Jātrā

status Kāpālī sub-caste, being the descendants of the Kusle and lower castes—perhaps the Poḍe. He claims that they accept the *nhaynhūmā* food prepared by Nāy Newar butchers on the seventh day after cremation (*idem*: 77). The Doṃ I spoke with in Pyangaon consider themselves distinct from both the Kusle-Kāpālīs and Kulus.

and Gūṃlā in particular, special *guthi* pay the musician an amount of four to five *pāthī*. At the Byāṃcā Nakegu, a minor festival in honour of frogs which is held during the full moon in the month of Śrāvaṇ (July-August), the Kusle and the Doṃ go round the village asking for one to two *mānā* of flattened rice and soya beans at each house. It should be noted, finally, that when they come to Pyangaon to play their instruments, the musicians are always given a meal or a share in the feast.

The Kusle musician who comes to Pyangaon does not work as a tailor in this community, as is usually the case in other villages. In fact, he does not even pursue that occupation in Lalitpur and Chapagaon. Whenever they need to have clothes cut and sewn, the farmers of Pyangaon call on the services Parbatiyā Damāī tailors from Taukhel. These work under the *phalcā* shelters at the sewing machines they bring along with them. They are usually hired during the week before the festival of Indra Jātrā (September) or before Dasaī, so that the villagers have new clothes for the festivities. The day's work starts at about 9:30 or 10 in the morning and ends at about five in the evening. The tailors are paid in cash: fives rupees a day in 1971. They are also given a small meal at around two o'clock consisting of fried soya beans, vegetables, and flattened rice.

The sweeper-fisherman, Poḍe or Dyaḥlā

The death of a young girl during the *bārāy tayegu* confinement ceremony, associated with a young woman's first menstrual period, implies major pollution in the house where the ritual is carried out. Such an event is extremely inauspicious. The spirit of the deceased girl may become dangerous for her family if not dealt with properly. The Swāgumi consequently ask the Poḍe, a particularly low caste, to take away the dead body and to bury it outside the village.

The blacksmith, Kāmī

The inhabitants of Pyangaon have their tools and farming implements forged by a blacksmith of the Parbatiyā caste, the Kāmī, who lives about fifteen minutes' walk from the village, to the southeast. A Newar blacksmith Kau (Nakarmī) lives in Chapagaon, but he has too many clients and is said to be too expensive.

While the Newar blacksmith is not a person from whom water can be accepted, the Kāmī blacksmith is both impure and untouchable. Generally speaking, the Jyāpu of Pyangaon place the Kāmī on the same level

as the musicians: like them, he cannot enter the house. The villagers also have to avoid his touching a brass jar full of water. If he does, the jar has to be purified.

The Kāmī works for the whole village. He has only a few clients elsewhere. His functions are purely economic and he does not perform any ritual services. He forges and repairs agricultural implements like hoes and sickles, and other tools such as knives and machetes, as required by his clients.

In exchange for these services, each household, depending on what it can afford, gives him a *bāli*, i.e., a share of the harvest. The wealthier families give four to five *pāthī* of paddy rice and two *pāthī* of wheat, and the poorer ones only give three *pāthī* rice and one *pāthī* of wheat. It should be noted that those families farming large plots of land often employ the Kāmī as a hired day-labourer in times of heavy agricultural work, such as the rice and wheat harvests or rice threshing. In 1971, his wages on such occasions were five rupees a day; sometimes six, if the day's work is long. He is also given corn beer throughout the day and a midday collation.

The Swāgumi as a dominant caste

It is clear that the Swāgumi villagers—who, as we have seen, own a great deal of irrigated land—function as a local dominant caste. They replicate the role of patrons in the society. In this regard, they are in the same position as most rural Jyāpus all over the Valley. With the exception of urban agriculturists, whose situation is sometime less advantageous—especially in Kathmandu, despite the land reforms of 1964—Newar Jyāpu cannot be classified only as rice cultivators. They are also quite a prosperous land-owning caste commanding a number of inferior groups.

Altogether, the Swāgumi of Pyangaon employ the ritual services of ten Newar castes external to the village, if priests of high rank are included. Naturally, these priests are in a completely different situation to that of the other service castes when they come to Pyangaon for ritual purposes. Priests give instructions and orders, they ask for such and such items they need for their ceremonies. They expect obedience. They behave like learned urban persons amidst rude and illiterate villagers. The Swāgumi treat them with respect and honour. Even the local *ācāḥju* priests stand in deference in front of them and willingly act as their assistants. On the contrary, the service castes are reminded clearly of their inferior

status when they visit Pyangaon. They are kept outside houses, at an adequate distance from drinking-water pots, they are given food only after everyone else has eaten. For the Jyāpu farmers, their low status derives primarily from their handling of impure substances and beings—blood, polluted hairs, death—and their congenital proximity with impurity in their hereditary occupations.

Three of these castes, the barber and the musicians Kusle and Doṃ, receive a fixed share of crops every year, that is, a *bāli*. They thus belong integrally to the local agrarian redistribution system. Others are paid in cash or kind on special occasions. Interestingly, the Parbatiyā Kāmī blacksmith has no religious functions attached to his professional activity, but is nevertheless paid a *bāli* by the farmers.

The Swãgumi of Pyangaon are thus fully integrated into the Newar caste system. This system relies on an extensive division of ritual services and exchanges focused either on the king, or on an influential caste possessing power and land. One point worth mentioning with relation to this configuration, however, is that the Swãgumi were not and are not called upon by the higher castes of the vicinity to carry out subsidiary activities themselves, as many Jyāpu are compelled or were compelled to until a few decades ago. As a general rule, the Swãgumi do not provide ritual or menial services to the Śreṣṭha or the Śākya. They are, therefore, also not called upon by high castes during funerals to scatter rice on the way to the cremation. They do not serve as cremation specialists, do not act as messengers for domestic ceremonies, and do not carry invitations to married Śreṣṭha daughters on festive occasions. If they did perform such functions for others, it was only very rarely, and then, too, their services consisted only of menial activities—for instance, work as tenants in the fields of a Chapagaon landowner of a higher rank. In other words, the relationships between Swãgumis and outsiders are asymmetrical and clearly to the advantage of the former. It seems that such a situation characterises large Jyāpu villages that are homogenous in terms of caste.

Admittedly, the Swãgumi were formerly obliged to play their *kūṃ pyākhã* dance (Toffin 1984: 90-101) in front of the Hanumān Ḍhokā royal palace in Kathmandu during the festival of Indra Jātrā, in exchange for a nominal subvention from the Guṭhi Saṃsthān office. Such a commitment associates them with other peripheral peasant castes like Putuwār and Balāmi who till today are expected to stage similar choreographic and theatrical plays for other castes. But the inhabitants of Pyangaon

brought this custom to an end in the 1950s. Moreover, the Swāgumi no longer exchange bamboo boxes against grain, an activity on which they had a kind of monopoly. Through this trade, they actively participated in former times in the old exchange system of goods and services, heavily dependent on the caste structure, within the Kathmandu Valley.

In addition, the so-called *jajmānī* system described in the preceding pages is declining rapidly. To limit ourselves to the Chapagaon area, the Kusle and Doṃ musicians are more and more reluctant to play music during festivities in Pyangaon. They feel embarrassed to do so. Besides, they increasingly reject these old functions, which are seen as the expression of an old-fashioned past and an anti-egalitarian spirit. On the other hand, the barber is still deeply involved in the life-cycle rituals of the inhabitants of Pyangaon: his craft represents a lucrative activity for him.

Conclusion: The Jyāpu sub-castes and sub-groups

Pyangaon is a rather unique case in the Kathmandu Valley: it constitutes a one sub-caste village whose members do not live—at least not in significant numbers—anywhere else. The farmers of the village form a completely separate unit of endogamy and commensality. Only the members of the community, i.e., the Swāgumi, may smoke a complete hookah water pipe together, and only they are allowed to enter a village kitchen when rice is being cooked. When it comes into contact with other Newar castes or neighbouring villages, Pyangaon acts as a distinctive community. Its inhabitants are isolated in their commensal habits and thereby more exclusive. This group cannot be recognised as a specific caste, or *jāt*, as the Swāgumi claim to be Jyāpu and nothing else. It operates, hence, as a sub-caste.

Several authors have shown the existence of internal divisions among the very large caste of Jyāpu (or Kisān). Chattopadhyay, quoting the Unpublished Papers of Brian Hougthon Hodgson in the Indian Office Library of London, states that the Jyāpu farmer caste was segmented into three groups in the 19th century: the 'bheendhungo', who are descendants of the Vaiśya; the 'dhungo', descendants of the Bare or Bādyā; and the 'dungoo', descendants of the Śreṣṭha. These groups are said to be divided again into 16 subsections: 'gokoo, kumhal, koenaso, mulmi (or mut), kahabhodja, duli, yungwar, ghukoo, gout, booshee (or pame), soa, dungoo, koomalh, mooshaka, cheo, awal, jewanalee' (1980: 93-96). Oldfield (1880: 185-86), for his part, names six 'classes' of Jyāpu:

the 'Mu, Danghu, Kumhar, Karbujha, Jaffu or Kissini, and Boni'.

These categories, a number of which still exist today, in some cases constitute groups of distinct status in relation to one another. The Dāgol (or Dāgū, Dhangū) for instance, who once specialised in measuring fields, are widely assumed to be of a superior status than other Jyāpu. The members of this group point out that their name means 'good or reliable person especially chosen'. It is an honorific title. The same is true of the Suwāl, whose name comes from *suwāḥ*, or 'cook'. These peasants are said to be of higher status because they have the right to cook food for the royal tutelary deity Taleju attached to the former Malla courts of the three cities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur.

In spite of these hierarchical distinctions, dominated by caste ideology and an opposition between the pure and impure, these groups usually intermarry. In most cases, Newar peasants react vehemently when questioned about sub-castes within their community; a number of them claim fundamental equality between all these groups.[13] But this is perhaps a recent development due to the substantialisation process of the caste, which is showing signs of becoming more and more of an ethnic group. (Chapter 12).

In other cases, however, intermarriage is scarcely possible. The Suwāl (or Swā) of Bhaktapur, for instance, who are Hindus, feel superior to the Jyāpu of Lalitpur and Kathmandu, who are Buddhists; they refuse to marry them. The latter reject this higher status and consider themselves to be superior. The Jyāpu of Kathmandu, on their side, refuse to marry the Ghāsi grass-cutter sub-group, living mainly in Yengal, whose members formerly brought grass to the royal palace. They similarly prohibit marriage with the Kāhāḥbhujā, residing mostly around Bhimsenthān, a group of musicians who, in ancient times, played a long thin horn called *kāhāṃ* (see below).

The potters Kumhāḥ (Prajāpatī) more often than not also form a separate sub-caste. In Thimi, they are allowed to marry Jyāpu and no question of status is raised. But in Bhaktapur, the rules of endogamy and commensality are strictly observed between them and the Suwāl. As far as Panauti is concerned, Kumhāḥ and Suwāl are set apart completely and constitute two different castes, the former ranking lower than the latter (Toffin 1984: 261, 279). In the old Kathmandu city, intermarriage was

13 The Jyāpu sub-groups of Kathmandu such as Mā, Mū, Sāpu and Mepu are mostly of equal status. See Chapter 3, note 25.

formerly forbidden: Kumhāḥ were viewed as inferior in status and completely excluded from the internal social organisation of the Jyāpu belonging to the 32 quarters.[14] Nowadays, though, the ban is almost lifted. To further complicate the picture, most of the Jyāpu refuse to marry and share cooked rice with the Kumhāḥ who make black pottery *(hāku jyā kumhāḥ)*, but they freely intermarry with the ones who make red pots and receptacles *(hyāmu kumhāḥ)*.[15] Such a distinction is common knowledge among peasants all over the Kathmandu Valley. The relationships between these sub-groups are, therefore, extremely complicated and vary from one place to another.

Interestingly, some of these groups or sub-castes are opposed to each other through specific religious duties. The cult of the divinity Rāto Matsyendranāth, which is central for all the farmers of Laliptur District, is thus operated by a number of Jyāpu groups, each having to perform a special ritual service or a job in relation to this god. The Baḍhai (Jyāpu carpenters) supply the wood necessary for the construction of Matsyendranāth's chariot and must look after the carpentry work involved. The Yaṃwā have to use ropes, leaves and cane shoots to build the structure which projects about 20 metres over the wheels of the chariot. The Ghaḥkhū (brakesmen) are responsible for stopping the chariot's wheels if they are going to crush someone or to meet with an obstacle. They receive an initiation of Bhairava because the wheels are identified with forms of the Bhairava deity (Locke 1980: 227) The Jāṃgal Tane must pull on the chariot's ropes. Finally, the Suwā prepare the meals offered to Matsyendranāth (Locke 1973: 25-26; Chattopadhyay 1980: 96). These examples indicate that the fragmentation of the Jyāpu caste relates to ritual matters rather to locality and territory.

In this respect, we may also mention the Kāhāḥbhujā (or Kābujā) who play, or formerly played, the wind instrument *kāhāṃ* at various festivals and at funerals; the Mū (or Munikār) of Kathmandu who provide the main temples of the city (including Taleju) with flowers, especially the *mū swāṃ* flower from which their name derives; and the Gwā who, in nearly all important localities, are in charge of cremating the dead body of high Hindu and Buddhist castes. Here, as in many other

14 Furthermore, it is said that Prajāpati women were formerly not allowed to directly propitiate Pacalī Bhairava, one chief deity of the Jyāpu of Kathmandu. Nowadays, nobody cares about this prohibition.

15 This distinction already existed in the 19th century. See Chattopadhyay (1980: 94), quoting B.H. Hodgson's unpublished papers.

examples throughout Newar society, issues related to the division of labour and economic factors are unsatisfactory to explain the whole system. The role of religion in the making of social groups appears to be pre-eminent. We are facing a remarkably complex division of rituals oriented towards sovereign deities and pious kings.

6

Territory, Death and Local Deities

The socio-religious structure of Maharjan villages

Grouping by kinship and grouping by contiguity have long been recognised in anthropological theory as the two main ways of forming a local political community. The classic distinction was put forward by Henry Maine in the mid-19th century (*Ancient Law*, 1861) and can be paraphrased as that between the principles of 'blood' and of 'territory'. Though Maine saw kinship or 'blood' as the older institution, he also referred to the historical process by which the basis of a community that originally might have been formed through territorial association was likely subsequently to become recast or reinterpreted in terms of blood relations. The general salience of these two principles continues to have some application in modern industrial societies. Since the French Revolution of 1789, which brought with it the concept of a liberal and democratic nationalism, France has, for instance, been strongly attached to land rights, *jus loci*, as far as national identity and citizenship are concerned, in contrast to Germany, where blood rights, *jus sanguinis*, are still prevalent. Interestingly enough, tradition-based societies of low economic devel-

---

A first version of this chapter was presented at All Souls College of Oxford University as the 2000 Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture. It was subsequently published in Italian in *Ethnosystemi*, 2003, X:10, pp. 91-101. I am most grateful to Daniela Berti and Gilles Tarabout of CNRS for their useful comments.

opment sometimes give precedence to locality over kinship.

In an article published in the journal *Kailash,* the late anthropologist Graham Clarke (1995) has shown the relevance of these two principles of association for the formation of modern ethnic and national identities in the Himalaya. He stressed, in particular, the importance of the topography, of bounded local territories and of parallel valley systems for the understanding of the recent political history of Himalayan countries. Clearly, the topographical fragmentation of that region has acted as a baffle against modern ideas of nationalism and political integration based on a 'same blood' idiom. Mountains hinder communication, and promote enclaves with local identities that undercut the power of wider 'tribal' or 'caste' divisions of kin that appear to fuel fundamentalist conflict in the plains. Within its highland territory, the Himalayan chain continues to act as a barrier to the integration that may be sought by nationalist movements of the sort that have been seen in the northern Gangetic plains. The sense of national belonging that exists in Nepal today does not appear to be homogeneous and exclusive in the manner we may associate with a developed nationalism of the West.

Unfortunately, this British author did not make any reference to the cultures of the Himalaya. No mention is made, for instance, of the pervading influence of the concept of territory and residence in Tibet. Yet all ethnographic studies of this country show without ambiguity that kinship bonds are frequently depreciated or overpowered by ties based on territory. In her book *Lieu de neige et de genévriers* (1989), Pascale Dollfus has demonstrated that the main social units of Ladakhi Tibetan villages were territorial and that the local society could be called, after Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991), a 'société à maisons', quite different from societies organised primarily on the basis of patrilineal kinship groups. In the village she studied, residence clearly overshadows lineality. Similar data has been reported from Central Tibet (D'ing-ri) by Barbara Aziz (1978). In addition to these, recent research inspired by the pioneering study of the Tibetologist, René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), has revealed the importance of the cult of sacred mountains, each associated with a sacred lake, in determining local groupings and structuring Tibetan village societies as distinctive units. As a matter of fact, territorial units were traditionally self-contained all over Tibet, with a great deal of local autonomy vis-à-vis the central state.

As far as South Asia is concerned, it was until recently considered incorrect, especially in France, to stress the importance of territory in

village organisation. Louis Dumont's theory, set out in *Homo Hierarchicus* and other works, emphasises caste links and hierarchy. It was difficult for this influential anthropologist to recognise communal relationships based on village ties. He asserted straightforwardly that 'the conception of village solidarity in India seems all too often to be a presupposition imposed upon the facts' (Dumont and Pocock 1957: 27). The main 'social referent' was supposed to be the dominant caste and hierarchy. The concept of territory was thus evicted from anthropological debate. Only Indian colleagues, such as M.N. Srinivas, and anthropologists from the United Kingdom and the United States of America rebellious against Dumont's views on caste devoted their time to showing the relevance of 'horizontal links' as against 'vertical links' in India's villages.[1]

Recent historical and anthropological studies, such as the one by Nicholas Dirks (1987) on the ethno-history of a little kingdom of South India, or the one by Dennis Hudson (1993) on the Hindu city of Madurai, have unmistakably revealed that such territorial links across the lines of caste are an important element in the sociology of India, and cannot be excluded from discussion. William Sax, a specialist on Garhwal, has argued that 'throughout India, persons and places are believed to mutually (though of course not exclusively) determine each other' (1991: 74). They are engaged in 'a continuing set of exchanges' (*ibid*: 72). According to this anthropologist, many South Asians think of their places of residence as biophysical entities. They believe themselves to be substantially affected by the place where they reside. Sax quoted the study by E.V. Daniel on South India, where it is reported that upon migrating to a new village, people often immediately look for their caste-mates, not so much to make their acquaintance as to establish whether or not the local soil is compatible with persons of their nature (1984: 67).

In this chapter, I am concerned with the respective roles of blood and territoriality among the Newar of Nepal, especially among the Jyāpu (agriculturist) caste of this ethnic group. It must be recalled that Newars, who have inhabited Kathmandu Valley for most than two millennia and speak a Tibeto-Burman language, form a very multifaceted Himalayan community. They are deeply Indianised and are divided into more than 30 castes, with Brāhmaṇs at the top of the hierarchy and former

1 Cf. *India's Villages*, edited by M.N. Srinivas (1955), with contributions, among others, from F.G. Bailey, McKim Marriott, Kathleen Gough and D.G. Mandelbaum.

'untouchables' at the bottom. Hinduism and Mahāyāna Buddhism continue to coexist in their religious life. The Jyāpu, with whom my material here is mostly concerned, are the largest among these castes. They live in rural areas as well as in old urban centres.[2]

As most studies have shown, territory is of utmost importance in Newar society and culture. The Kathmandu Valley was divided during the late mediaeval period into three autonomous kingdoms—Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu—which fought against each other for centuries and were extremely jealous of their individuality. This political fragmentation and these conflicts have left traces on the religious as well as social structures. The Newar are traditionally organised in small territorial units—whether villages or city quarters—marked by introversion. Even today, people remain strongly attached to their original settlements even if they have migrated to other places. They usually return to visit their relatives and friends at the time of the main local festival. Settlements are protected from the dangers of the outside world by a ring of deities, often supplemented in the past by defensive walls. Although they are divided into castes, the inhabitants collectively worship common deities linked to a particular territory, their own individual *kṣetra*. Interdependence among the castes, and complementarities of ritual duties during festivals and in the cult of local deities obliterate, at least in part, the religious hierarchy of the pure and the impure. Obviously, village solidarity within the Kathmandu Valley is not 'a simple architectural and geographical fact' as Pocock and Dumont (1957: 26) claim of the Indian subcontinent. The importance of locality is so great in the villages as well as in the cities that, as in Tibet, it is territorial ties rather than kinship that determine social relationships. As will be shown, kinship units tend to be absorbed by groups based on residence and by the local ritual associations, called *guthi* (from Skt. *goṣṭhī*, meaning 'association'), which play a central role in Newar society (Chapter 9).

The Newar case is of special interest because it links explicitly territory and death. As a matter of fact, in this complex Nepali society, the social links woven around soil are closely related to the celebration of mortuary rites. To be more exact, the affiliation of a person to a given territorial unit depends explicitly on his membership to a specific funeral group attached to this territory. It is an original situation when compared

2 For a general presentation of the Jyāpu agriculturist caste of the Newar, cf. Toffin (1984), as well as Gellner and Quigley (1995). See also Chapter 12 of this book.

to the Indian world of castes, where cults of the dead do not create well-delimited social groups and where, with some exceptions, ancestors do not contribute to affirm the cohesion of a kinship group. Only ascetics and persons who died accidentally or in an unusual way are durably remembered (Blackburn 1983; Tarabout 2001).[3] At least partially, though, the Newar case could be compared with that of the Indian tribal religions. As will be recalled later, some Indian tribes give to the spirits of the departed a crucial role in social life and establish clear connections between ancestrality and territoriality.

I shall focus my presentation on the rural areas of the Kathmandu Valley, which are less known and which have better preserved traditions than do the cities. My data derive primarily from Newar peasants, and more specifically from Jyāpu villages. It has been mainly collected in two localities—Pyangaon and Theco—where I did intensive fieldwork during the 1970s and 1980s. Also included is material I collected between 1995 and 1999 during a survey of eight of these units. This recent research sheds new light on the social and religious organisation of these communities.

Village space and kinship units

Newar villages of the Kathmandu Valley are predominantly inhabited by farmers from the Jyāpu (Maharjan) caste. Some of them, like Pyangaon and Sunaguthi, are entirely single-caste villages. Others, like Theco (New. Thecwa) or Khokana, consist of a majority of Jyāpu, along with other castes, such as Gathu gardeners, Śreṣṭha traders and peasants, non-agricultural castes of low status (Nāy butchers, Nau barbers) who carry out ritual services for the Newar farmers, and low castes such as the Kau blacksmiths, indispensable for the manufacture and repair of agricultural implements. In a few cases, such as that of Satungal, the population is divided almost equally between the Jyāpu and the Śreṣṭha. Generally, the multi-caste structure of the population is marked spatially: nearly every minority caste-group is settled within a concentrated group or a compound area. 'Untouchables', for their part, have their quarters towards the outskirts of the settlement, beyond the pale of 'civilised' society. Their position outside the locality demonstrates that such villages are closed systems within a hierarchically ordered society. Interestingly,

3 For an overview of classical conceptions of ancestry and the cult of the dead in India, see Dumont (1980) and Malamoud (1982).

these villages are not ethnically mixed: members of no other ethnic group, such as the Parbatiyā or the Tamang, live in them. They are purely Newar. Such homogeneity plays an important role in the cohesion of the locality. Size, too, is a crucial matter in this connectionp; the populations of these rural localities range from 600 inhabitants to 5,000.

Let us say a few words about the physical setting and the rural economy of these settlements. Newar villages of the Kathmandu Valley are mostly constructed on high ground and on flat terraces overlooking river valleys from a distance of 50 to 100 metres. The area around the village is cultivated with dry crops, such as maize, non-irrigated rice, mustard, and various kinds of pulses. Irrigated rice is grown in the lowlands during the rainy season, in rotation with wheat in the winter. These Newar settlements are quite rich. Their inhabitants are able to sell a significant portion of their agricultural produce—vegetables as well as rice—to the urban market. The land is very fertile, and yields are traditionally high compared to other areas of Nepal or even other regions of Asia. Recently, the introduction of improved varieties of seed, particularly of rice and wheat, has markedly increased yields. Although agriculture forms the foundation of the local economy, an increasing number of the population engage in wage employment outside the village.

The Newar village units of the Kathmandu Valley are characterised by a very concentrated pattern of settlement, very different from the dispersed structure characteristic of the Parbatiyā castes that speak Nepali as their mother tongue. The long rows of attached houses of three to four storeys with their tile-covered roofs along well-designed streets give a compactness to the overall village layout. Fields and gardens start from the back of the houses and lie all around. With the exception of the broader streets, which are nowadays sometimes covered with asphalt and used by cars and trucks, the lanes are narrow, less than five metres wide. The buildings are constructed either along these axes, with their decorated facades oriented towards them, or perpendicularly to them, behind the streets. As in urban settlements, extensions at the back of the houses towards inner blocks often constitute courtyards built up on all sides, to which small, covered passages provide public access. Occasionally, streets widen to form small squares that act as neighbourhood centres.

Most of the villages are divided into quarters, or *twāḥ*, known by particular names. These smaller units earlier had organisational and administrative functions, such as the collection of taxes and the settlement

of minor cases of justice. They have lost that significance since 1950, but still remain an important element of the village structure, especially in ritual affairs. Their boundaries are nearly always clearly defined in the memories and consciousness of the inhabitants. In addition, all Newar villages are divided into territorial moieties: an upper part, *cway*, and a lower part, *kway*. Their respective positions are fixed by the orientation (upstream and downstream) of the nearest river. As I have shown in an earlier work (Toffin 1996*b*), this dual division is an important aspect of spatial structure and of the mapping of the locality in the inhabitants' eyes. It has no social content, but in most cases entails some ritual implications. Theco's two moieties, for instance, are under the protection of two different tutelary goddesses: Bālkumārī in the upper part and Brahmāyaṇī in the lower part.

The village's compact structure is associated with a clear symbolic image of the settlement. As in Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu, the Malla capitals of the Kathmandu Valley of the 13th to the 18th centuries, there is a need to establish a religious centre. This central point is marked by a temple dedicated to either a Hindu or a Buddhist deity—by a small Buddhist *cībhāḥ* (the Newar farmers are, in principle, Buddhist), or by an uncarved stone embodying Kṣetrapāl, the god protecting the land. Kṣetrapāl is identified by the villagers with Bhairava. He is worshipped during all communal events, and the blood of animals is occasionally offered to him. The villagers also have a very set idea of the religious boundaries of their settlement. In contrast to the cities, the ritual boundaries are not made up of a circle of temples dedicated to Aṣṭa Mātṛkā goddesses and located in the eight directions of space. The village is, however, demarcated from the outside by one or two *pīṭh* sanctuaries (from the Sanskrit *pīṭha)*, which play a religious role during festivals. Furthermore, the extremities of localities are more often than not characterised by numbers of ritual rubbish dumps, where polluting materials, impure substances and remains of religious feasts are thrown away. These sites, inhabited by supernatural beings of an ambiguous nature, protect the villagers against various evils coming from the outside, especially epidemics. Various rituals related to possession by bad spirits are performed here.

The cohesion and the unity of the village are reinforced by the worship of common gods. Generally, each village has its own temples to Ganedyaḥ (Gaṇeśa) and to Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the local god of music. The first deity is worshipped daily by each household, especially by the women,

with incense, an oil-lamp, uncooked rice and vermilion paste. Ganedyaḥ is also revered at the time of festivals and during life-cycle rituals, such as rice-feeding ceremonies, boys' initiations, and marriages. He drinks locally made alcohol. Only larger rural localities have more than one Ganedyaḥ temple. Nāsaḥdyaḥ for his part is worshipped by all the musicians of the community—drummers, flautists and cymbal-players—as well as by masked dancers where present. He is identified by most of the population with Nṛtināth, the dancing Śiva (Naṭarāja), and is represented by one or three triangular openings in the wall of the dedicated altar. In some cases, as in Khokana, two temples of Nāsaḥdyaḥ are found, one associated with each side of the village.

Additionally, worship in these villages focuses on one or two temples of a tutelary deity who ensures their protection and about whom more will be said later. This deity, often associated with the origins of the village, can be either male or female. In the south of the Valley—that is, in the district of Lalitpur—one can mention Bālkumārī, Brahmāyaṇī, Rudrāyāṇī, Harasiddhi, Bhailaḥdyaḥ Bhṛṅgāreśvar Mahādev, Kāleśvar Mahādev, among others. These deities are worshipped at fixed times by the whole village during public festivals, as well as during the life-cycle rites of various families. The priests of the local temples are mainly chosen from the Jyāpu caste. As will be shown, the entire religious life of the settlement revolves around this deity. Similarly, in the case of multi-caste villages, the whole of the locality pays homage to the tutelary god.

It should be noted that most of these rural settlements are ritually enclosed several times a year to mark them off from what lies outside. At the Gathāmugaḥ festival, which falls during the rainy season, for instance, evil spirits are driven out from the locality at night and offerings are made at the cult sites on the boundaries. Afterwards, each house is barricaded and cut off from all contact with the outside world. Similarly, in several communities, the space of the village is ritually isolated for a certain period of time. In Theco, the village is completely cut off from the outside for one month every twelve years, at the time of the great festival of the masked dance of the local Nava Durgā. Such ritual enactments, which are found across other parts of Nepal, Assam and South-East Asia (Macdonald 1975), are of paramount importance for the representation of the local space as a clustered unit.

Jyāpu village society, the main topic of this chapter, is divided into small, patrilineal lineages, four to six generations deep, called *khalaḥ*, *bhu* or *kawāḥ*. These units, which are not named, are rather weakly

structured. They fall apart as soon as the memory of a common agnatic ancestor has faded—usually after five generations or so. No written genealogies are kept. Kin groups are defined primarily in religious terms, and are manifested most clearly at the time of funerals. On the demise of a close agnate *(phuki)* a mourning period of thirteen days is observed. During this time, the *phuki* are held to be in a state of pollution. For the death of more distant agnates *(bā phuki* or *jhina phuki)* or married daughters, by contrast, the mourning period is only four days. As a rule, no marriage may take place within these patrilineal kinship units. Cross-cousin marriages are also forbidden.[4]

As with all Newar castes, the other religious attribute of the Jyāpu's lineage is the cult of a common tutelary god called *digudyaḥ*. Each *kawāḥ* or *khalaḥ* collectively worships this divinity once a year, either in the month of Māgh (January-February), or in the month of Baiśākh (April-May). Members of the kin group gather on that day on open sites located at the edge of the locality and make offerings to the deity, or deities, represented by a series of uncarved stones. An ornament called *kikampā*, which is kept at other times in the sacred room of the house of the eldest man of the lineage, is placed on the top of the non-iconic divinity. It has the form of a diadem or of the carved halo found on divine statues, Hindu as well as Buddhist, and it serves as a symbol of the god. A collective feast attended by men, women and children, is held on the spot. In some villages, such events still gather together a large number of relatives. In other cases, only a small group of people is present. When a split occurs within the group, the new lineage orders another ornament from the goldsmith. After transferring the god spirit from one *kikampā* to the other, the newly made ornament is worshipped as the lineage deity. From that moment onward, two different feasts will be held successively in the same sanctuary. This aspect of the worship of these aniconic deities expresses a genealogical charter linking the different local kinship groups and establishes a connection between territorial boundaries and ancestral earth.

Village endogamy is another important social feature of these Jyāpu localities. In Pyangaon, until recently there was even a ban on marrying a woman from outside on pain of expulsion from the community. In other villages, such restrictions are not in force. Statistically, though, the rate of endogamous marriages is, or was until quite recently, over 80 per

4 On Newar kinship and kin groups, see particularly Ishii (1995).

cent in nearly all major Jyāpu settlements. For some scholars, this tendency applies to most Newars. Declan Quigley writes, for instance: 'In theory, and still very much in practice, Newars marry Newars not only of their caste but of the local sub-caste. By "local" I mean usually within half an hour's walk and often much less' (1984: 160). The strength of the relationship between in-laws is, in part, responsible for this village endogamy. There are a number of obligations between affinally related persons and households. The marriage ceremonies are followed, for instance, by a series of formal visits between the two sides of the family. Exchanges of gifts and food between the two households are made during nearly all ceremonies, and the married daughter is obligated to conduct numerous ceremonies in her natal home during funerals. It is thus appropriate for a woman to marry into a house in close proximity to that of her parents. The introversion of Jyāpu social units also favours such matrimonial ties. A preference for marriage within the settlement, of course, tends to multiply the bonds one has within the village community and to strengthen the village's unity.

It is clear from this account that these villages have a strong sociological reality and constitute well-defined structural entities. However, they are not totally autonomous or isolated. Administratively, they are attached to wider units of which they form only a part. Economically, they are dependent on nearby markets and on one of the three former Malla capitals. It is in these centres that villagers sell their foodstuffs and buy what they do not produce themselves. The very land that is cultivated by the farmers is sometimes owned by Śreṣṭha or high Buddhist Newar castes from elsewhere. In the ritual sphere, too, an attribution of self-sufficiency does not correspond with the facts. Most of the villages call upon the services of high-status priests from elsewhere, Buddhist or Hindu, to celebrate certain ceremonies: funeral rites, the consecration of a *stūpa*, the pacification of a house, the initiation of local Tantric officiants, and so on. Most of them also use the services of other, lower castes living outside their own locality. Besides, inhabitants of these Jyāpu villages participate in the main festival of the nearby town and worship its main divinities. The inhabitants of Theco, Pyangaon, Bulu, and Harisiddhi, all located in Lalitpur District, thus pay regular homage to Rāto Matsyendranāth (New. Būgadyaḥ). This god holds the same position in relation to his district as village divinities do in relation to their villages. In recent years, the opening up of these peasant communities has been greatly accelerated in all aspects, including

that of matrimonial alliances with Newar outsiders.

The role of death groups in the locality

Kin groups, however, are swallowed up and encapsulated in multi-functional groups of the *guthi* type. The key social grouping is the death association called *sī guthi*, *sanāḥ guthi*, or *imurdā guthi*[5] in Newar. Membership of such organisations is essential for a full and proper integration of the individual into the community. To be excluded from one's *sī guthi* is to be excluded from one's lineage and one's caste. Moreover, a Jyāpu peasant who moves to another village or to the nearest urban centre will remain affiliated to his natal death association, as long as he keeps regular relations with his natal village. Socially, this group can be characterised by three main features. First, it is a compulsory association: all the Jyāpu members of the village must belong to one such *guthi*. Second, it is based on a fixed and inherited membership: a man is affiliated to the *guthi* of his father and is not supposed to change his *guthi* during his lifetime. To move from one *guthi* to another is traditionally rare, and must be approved by the heads of the two associations. Third, such groupings are mainly residential: membership of a *sī guthi* belonging to a village different from the one where one is born or lives is unthinkable. In all these respects, the *sī guthi* of village peasants differ from the *guthi* of other Newar castes, with a few exceptions (Chapter 3). The latter associations, formed to carry out various functions and operating either in rural or urban contexts, are purely voluntary, and can be changed over the years.

Several traits of these Jyāpu funeral groups merit emphasis. In the first place, membership of *sī guthi* is restricted to males. Women, however, can benefit from the ritual services of the death groups of their husbands at the time of their funerals. Another important point is to be noted: only heads of households may be members *(guthiyār)* of a *guthi*. A son will thus be considered a real member only if and after he separates from his father. In Sunaguthi village, where the number of members of the *sī guthi* is extremely large, the affiliation is formalised only after the death of the father.

Although these groupings are not clans or lineages, they are often made up of kinship units closely related to each other. As stated earlier, however, genealogical memory is not deep, and members of the group

5 These terms are often abbreviated by the rural Jyāpu and transformed into *gū*.

cannot trace their descent to a common ancestor. Furthermore, accidents and conflicts in the history of some families have introduced a number of members who are not agnatically related. The practice of adoption of children from a man's sister's family in the case of a lack of male offspring has also changed the agnatic composition of the kin groups. This is why marriage alliances within the death society are not prohibited so long as they fall outside a *phuki* relationship.

The peasant community of each village is divided into two, three, four, or more *sī guthi*. In several cases, a single original association is said to have split over the years into separate groups. In general, these death associations are not strictly localised, by quarter for example, or if so, only in a loose manner. In some exceptional cases, the entire Jyāpu population of the locality is affiliated to a single association. In Sunaguthi village, for instance, the single *sī guthi* of the village encompasses over 600 households. Each *guthi* has its own common house in the village, called either *guthi chẽ*—literally, 'the house of the *guthi*', or *capāḥ*, which designates, in principle, a ceremonial rest-house. As we shall see later on, this common house is used for the annual feasts and various meetings.

Each funeral *guthi* has a common deity who presides over the activities of the group and is worshipped by all the members at least once a year. In normal times, this deity, called Sīdyaḥ in Newar (from *sī* for 'death'), is kept in the house of the eldest person of the group—the *thakāli*—or in the house of the member in charge of the association for the year. The host worships the Sīdyaḥ once a week, in the evening. The Sīdyaḥ is represented by a statue, a mask or an earthenware vessel vested with strong magical power. It is kept in a concealed place in the attic, and is very much feared by the members of the group. It is associated with cremations, and is frequently identified with Bhairava (Āju). The patron deity plays an important role in the self identification of the group. Women are not allowed to touch him. The same is true of children who have not yet shed their first teeth: these children are considered immature, *kaci*.

The principal function of the *sī guthi* is to organise the funerals of its members. It has to oversee the transfer of the corpse to the funeral pyre as well as to take care of the cremation itself. It is also charged with the dispersal of the ashes to the four corners of the Kathmandu Valley.

Normally, all the members of the *sī guthi* have to participate in the funeral procession from the house of the deceased to the cremation ground

located by the neighbouring river, generally to the west of the settlement. Even the women follow the procession. One of them, a married daughter of the bereaved family, throws rice and paddy along the route. As soon as the womenfolk reach the boundaries of the locality, they return to their respective houses. Once at the cremation site, the *guthiyār* and the near agnates sprinkle the corpse with water. The pyre is constructed by the members of the association from wood kept in a small storage space in the village belonging to the *sī guthi*. Finally, in the days following the cremation, both the men and the women of the death group come to present their condolences to the family of the deceased. This ceremony is called *bicāḥ wanegu* in Newar.

The members of the *guthi* also gather together every year, on a fixed date, for various religious ceremonies as well as a large feast. In Theco, this event takes place during the main festival of the village, on the occasion of Thīlā Punhī, the full moon of the month of Mārga (November-December). During the four days of the festival, the various *sī guthi* of the locality focus their worship on their respective *guthi* houses. The Sīdyaḥ god of the funeral association is exposed during these days in the common house and worshipped by the members with sacred water, vermilion paste, oil lamps and incense. In Theco, as in some other villages, the tutelary god is housed in a special hut made of bamboo strips and straw, temporarily constructed inside the *guthi* house. The feast takes place in an atmosphere marked by religiosity, gravity and reserve.[6]

Outsiders cannot attend these meals and are not permitted to watch the proceedings. *Sī guthi* meetings and ritual procedures are the business only of those who are members; others are physically debarred from attending by the erection of a screen or the guarding of the entrance of the *guthi* house. The death group is hence much more than a way of earning religious merit or an association with a charitable purpose. It is a secret society, impregnated with sacramental values, which contributes to defining a sense of mystical community. It should be noted that the food taken at these ceremonial meals is first offered to the Sīdyaḥ god of the group. The dishes are thus sacred in many ways. Their consumption in a communal setting transforms the assembly into a spiritual group. Especially significant in these ceremonies is the *sī kāḥ bhway* ritual, during which the head of a sacrificed buffalo or goat is divided up and consumed, the various parts going in a prescribed order to the eight most

6 For parallels in Newar cities, cf. van den Hoek and Shrestha (1992: 665).

senior members. Given the spiritual values attached to the head of the body (honour, spirit, sacredness) in Newar and the wider Nepali society, such a sharing has a crucial significance beyond the mundane. As a matter of fact, the mutual affinity felt by those who periodically join in the execution of these rites and feasts is extremely strong. At the same time, the line between the elders and the juniors is strongly demarcated.

Jyāpu death *guthi* play an essential role in social control over the locality. The elders of the association, the *thakāli*, are the key figures of the village (the same is true in towns) and the custodians of traditional practice. They have ceremonial privileges such as being the first to be served at feasts and wearing white turbans on ritual occasions. They are periodically invited by influential members of the community to feasts called *deś bhway* (from *deś*: locality, and *bhway*: feast). These *thakāli* are in fact the headmen of the village. They are in a position to expel from the community any man who has had sexual relations with women from impure castes or who has married a non-Jyāpu woman. Bad behaviour, the breaking of caste rules, theft within the village—especially of religious objects—and violence against other members can also be sanctioned by exclusion from the group after a proper meeting. The social and religious status of the concerned person will be deeply affected. Most probably, no other association in the village will accept him. Nobody will help him perform funeral rites and to carry away the corpse at death. Such excommunication is in fact synonymous with exclusion from one's caste and from one's lineage cult group. Besides, in several villages, the importance of the death societies for the proper integration of individuals into the community is even greater. In Pyangaon, for instance, marriage alliances have to be approved in all cases by the heads of the individual's funeral group. This is done in the following way: Some weeks after the marriage ceremony, a feast is held in the groom's house. The *thakāli* of the various *guthi* of the village are invited. If they refuse to come, the marriage is not formally approved. As a rule, death groups indicate who acceptable marriage partners are and who are not. They provide an unambiguous marker of caste status.

The cult of the tutelary deity

As has been indicated earlier, every Newar village has its own patron deity, belonging either to the Hindu or to the Buddhist pantheon. Such a deity carries important values and symbolic representations attached to the territory. He (or she) is strongly attached to the community, even if

neighbouring villagers can join in the worship at certain times of the year. It is often said that if an unscrupulous person should try to steal the deity's statue or ornament, the representation of the god will become abnormally heavy, so that the robber cannot move it. The patron deity is sometimes believed to be the sovereign of the people living around him. He is taken, for instance, to be responsible for the general prosperity of the locality. He can also take the life of a person living under his jurisdiction. Regular offerings to his altar can be seen as a tribute to him. In all events, this type of deity is a living symbol of the settlement and expresses the identity of its inhabitants. In many ways, he plays the part of a god of the land, and can be compared to other Bhūme types of deities across Nepal, all of whom combine two aspects: one benevolent, the other violent and dreadful.

This tutelary god is housed in a specific temple, often of the Nepali style, with multiple storeys and tiered roofs. In a Jyāpu mono-caste village or a village dominated by the Jyāpu, the priests are chosen from the locality and belong to the Jyāpu caste. They receive a Tantric initiation, *dekhā* (from the Sanskrit *dīkṣā)*, to perform their sacerdotal functions. These offices are usually hereditary, from father to son.

The social and religious life of the community is centred upon this temple.[7] The deity is worshipped early every morning by a woman from each household following a fixed religious route that makes the circuit of all the notable gods and sacred sites of the locality. In most cases, the women do not enter the temple, but throw the offerings from the outside towards the altar, ringing the outside ceremonial bell if there is one. The deity also has its annual festival, fixed by the lunar calendar, and this constitutes the 'village festival', *deś jātrā,* or the 'main festival', *mū jātrā,* of the local religious calendar. On that occasion, the god is carried by young boys through the streets of the village in a palanquin. He is considered so powerful that he is supposed to cause the death of one villager every year during the festival.

It should be noted that most of these divinities receive regular animal sacrifice. Blood is shed on the statue or on the stone representing the god as well as on the soil of the locality and on the villagers watching the sacrifice. Such practices are supposed to be auspicious for everybody

7 The preponderant role of these village temples reminds one of the village monastery *(gompa)* of the Sherpa communities of Helambu in Nepal. In his PhD thesis (1980), Clarke has demonstrated that such *gompa* play a determining role in the social life of the villages concerned.

and guarantee the continued prosperity of the village. As a rule, it seems that blood, violence, and in some villages (Theco, Harisiddhi) even human sacrifice is periodically required to regenerate the locality, ensure its well-being, and establish a new link between the tutelary god and its inhabitants. Such offerings transform the village's space into a sacrificial ground and legitimise the primacy of the god in the local hierarchy.

Interestingly enough, funeral societies of the Jyāpu villages investigated here are also dedicated to the worship of these local deities. As such, they are not only concerned with death and social control, but also with life and the general welfare of the locality. Such a close association between bad sacredness and good sacredness within the same institution is very peculiar to Newar socio-religious organisation. *Guthi* death societies clearly combine these two opposite fields. In their connection to the local deities, death groups have a crucial role in the definition of territoriality and play a prominent part in the religious life of the whole village.

Let us take, for instance, Theco village. In the upper part of the locality, each of the four death groups has separate duties towards the goddess Bālkumārī, who presides over the destiny of this part of the community. The first one offers cooked rice to the goddess every month on the eve of the new moon. The second offers her rice-beer on every full moon day. The third presents rice, vermilion paste, incense and flowers on the first day of the lunar month. And the last one takes responsibility for the cult of the Bhairava situated in the upper part of the village.[8] The tasks of watching over the temple, guarding the statues, and cleaning the roofs rotate among the membership according to an age-set division into four groupings called *puī* in Newar. It is estimated that within each moiety of Theco every male inhabitant will have to undertake such a charge *(puī pāḥlāḥ)* at least once in his life.

But this is not the whole story. The death societies composing the locality ensure also the performances of the various rituals of the land god. In Theco village, for instance, the funeral societies of the lower part form the Brahmāyaṇī *guthi*, and the funeral societies of the upper part constitute the Bālkumārī *guthi*. These two expanded associations are funded by paddy fields, held as *rāj* (state) *guthi* and registered with the Guṭhī Sāṃsthān, the national corporation in charge of these religious holdings. In 1975, these lands were cultivated by tenants from Theco and neighbouring villages. In addition, each *guthi* owns a common house

8 In Theco village, this Bhairava is associated with the cult of Bālkumārī.

near the temple of its goddess. To run such estates, the two associations concerned have generated a complex hierarchical structure. The Brahmāyaṇī *guthi* for instance is headed by a body of 21 headmen, *thakāli*, who include the five most senior members of the association, six cooks, six accountants, and six watchmen. Some of the functions of the *guthi* rotate among the membership; others are permanent. These 21 persons are feasted more than twelve times a year with great abundance of food and beer. These meals place the elders of the group in conscious opposition to the younger generation. Furthermore, like all other *guthi* feasts, these gatherings transform the village community into a collective body, separate and distinct from outsiders.

The festivals of the local deities are also organised by funeral groups. In Khokana, for instance, the festival of the main divinity of the village, Śikālī, which is celebrated from the third until the seventh day of the bright fortnight of Āśvin (September-October) includes the preparation of nine earthenware jars of rice-beer. The three death societies of this Jyāpu village each prepare three of these a few days before the celebration. These pots are sacred (some of them are decorated with a head of Bhairava). The beer, prepared from fermented 'black rice', is said to contain special powers, *śakti*. Every member of the association has to drink a little of it.

In Theco village, the festivals of Bālkumārī and Brahmāyaṇī are both held at the same time as the feast of the death societies: between the end of the lunar month of Mārga and the beginning of Pauṣ. This is the main event in the year's ritual calendar. On the first day of the festival, the statues of the two goddesses are carried to their common *pīṭha* (New. *pigā*), a sacred place outside the village proper, towards the south. A Hindu Tantric priest comes at night from the small neighbouring town of Chapagaon to perform a fire-sacrifice before the two assembled deities. The next morning, Bālkumārī and Brahmāyaṇī are taken back to the village and carried in separate palanquins through the streets of their respective moieties.

In summary, *sī guthi* groups are much more than death associations. They have multifarious functions that embrace many areas of socio-religious life. They are, in fact, the keystones of village structure. More particularly, they establish a connection between the dead and the cult of local divinities. Each male villager is simultaneously bound to a funeral group and to a territorial god. In my opinion, this organic link is a marked characteristic of Newar social structure. Consequently, funerals appear

in traditional Kathmandu Valley as events constructive of social bonds. Among Jyāpu peasants, as among most low- or medium-status Newar castes, death is more important than marriage. From the religious point of view, marriage is not a marked ceremony, especially among Jyāpu, and does not entail complex rituals. By contrast, funerals are linked with long and extremely complex ceremonies that occupy the bereaved family for months. In this regard, Newars are much more like the other Tibeto-Burman-speaking hill groups of Nepal[9] than the Parbatiyā and North Indians, among whom marriage is the great event of the family group, especially among high castes.

Conclusion

Some important conclusions can be drawn from this ethnographic analysis. First, cult units are a crucial element of the Newar social structure. Without a patron god, a group has no legal existence, no legitimacy. A kingdom's capital becomes a political entity through the collective cult of the tutelary deity of the former Malla king, Taleju, or Kumārī. A village is transformed into a distinct and cohesive body through the worship of a tutelary and protective deity. Funeral groups become legitimised through their god of death, Sīdyaḥ. Kin groups, too, are preferably defined by reference to a common god, the *digudyaḥ*, worshipped at regular intervals by the patrilineal relatives. Everywhere in the Newar sphere, space is identified and validated by the divinities who reside in it. In all cases, territoriality is thought of as a religious space and at every level, sacralisation is a compulsory process by which a group becomes a distinct structural entity. Even the royal cities of the Malla are still conceptually imagined as religious diagrams *(maṇḍala)*, enclosing a series of Tantric divinities. Identity and separateness derive primarily from common reference to a tutelary deity or to a group of gods attached to a specific spatial unit. Such divinities are a sign of the individuality and independence of the local group.

On the other hand, attention has to be drawn to the low structuring power of kinship. Admittedly, the exchange of ritual duties between wife-givers and wife-takers, agnates and affines, is very important in the life-cycle ceremonies. On the whole, however, Newar descent units do not form corporate groups and do not constitute the organising framework

9 See also Toffin (1997) for the importance of death and death groups among the Pahari (Pahi) of the south of the Kathmandu Valley.

of the society. To become influential, they have to be transformed into religious units. It is now widely known to anthropologists that in such cases, other types of groupings, such as age classes, secret societies or various voluntary associations, tend to become prominent.

Newar death and cremation associations have to be seen in this light. They are the main loci of the society, and are at the foundation of the social system as a whole. At the same time, they clearly have a hybrid character: they are not defined exclusively by either kinship or residence, but by a mixture of the two. For instance, the language of kinship remains important in the *guthi* pattern. Death groups are often thought of in terms of consanguinity: they generally form exogamic groups, they each have a common tutelary god, and most of all, their strong patrilineal inflection (as cult units associated with the main local divinity) is akin in spirit to the patrilineality of the kin groups. As a matter of fact, women are barred from the sacred ceremonials considered most important for the community. Such a prohibition helps to reproduce social relations of male domination and female subordination. But it is clear from this that peasants' death groups are conceptually recast into idioms of kinship.

What about the link between death and territory, so decisive in the cultural repertoire of the Newar, especially of the Jyāpu agriculturist caste? The importance of death in connection to territory is often explained by the presence of ancestors in the earth. The burial of dead persons incorporates a mystical element into the soil. Local social units and landscape thus store memory; they are memorials to departed relatives and founders. As has often been observed, death is a means of cementing territorial bonds. In French villages, to have dead relatives buried in the local cemetery is an important step towards better integration into the local community. The same can be said of many other European countries. On the other hand, the cult of the deceased is also an important element in the construction of a nation's identity. The erection of a memorial to the memory of these dead is an essential feature of a village's representation of its past. In this perspective, death is a crucial medium through which a group of people establishes links with the territory it occupies. Accordingly, territory provides permanence to the ancestors of these people and legitimises the position of the living in their present lives.

Perhaps paradoxically, ancestrality is secondary in the Newar idiom attached to territory. With some rare exceptions, the dead are cremated and not buried in the Kathmandu Valley and their ashes dispersed in

rivers. Suggestively enough, the cult of ancestors is not very developed among the Newar. Ancestors are propitiated only occasionally, during *śrāddha* rituals, and very rarely further back than the grandfather. They are not granted great importance in society. The main preoccupation of the relatives is to make the dead disappear or to shuffle them as rapidly as possible into a collective category (Vergati 1995: 19). Even the lineage deity of the Newar, of whom I gave a brief description above, is transformed in a way into a god of the land; he has no name (to the uninitiated) and he establishes primarily a link between the blood relatives paying homage to him and the territory on which they live.[10]

The real 'ancestors' of Newar societies are the living elders, the *thakāli*, of the various *guthi* groupings. These elders, the most senior persons in the group, preside over all religious affairs and are consulted at every critical moment in the life of the group. Everybody pays them respect and bows down before them in a token of submission. To reach their positions, more often than not they have to undergo a special ritual, *thakāli luyegu*, which is a kind of consecration; and they often wear rings in one ear, a sign that they have undergone another ceremony, the *burā jākwa*, celebrated by persons of both genders who have reached the age of 77. After this old-age ritual, Newars are considered quasi-divine and progressively relinquish active control over daily subsistence activities. Once vanished, however, these deeply respected old persons are rapidly forgotten. They lose their social identity.

Newar culture contrasts sharply in this regard with that of other Nepali populations, such as the kinship-dominated Tamang or Gurung hill tribes, where kin groups find their cohesion in the memory of a well-established list of ancestors, and where marriage between cross-cousins is prescribed. As a matter of fact, it seems that the strength of ancestrality in Nepal (as in other countries) is proportional to the strength of the unilineal kin groups. Nick Allen, for instance, has suggested of Nepali hill tribes that: 'As caste society infiltrates the clan-based village of the once territorially segregated tribe, as temporary contractual relationships tend to replace hereditary ones, and as national language displaces the tribal, the cult of the tribal ancestors become more and more peripheral' (1976: 526).

10 As a rule, the resemblance between the *pīṭh* sanctuaries of the tutelary gods of the village (Mātṛkā goddesses, for instance) and the sanctuaries of the lineage deities *digudyaḥ* is striking. Cf. G. Toffin (1984) and A. Vergati (1995: 40). Both are established outside the locality and are built with stones of the same shape and with the same manner of decoration.

I would argue that the patron gods of the Newar, and more particularly their land gods, have assumed the role played by ancestors in other custom-based societies. Some explicit links exist. For instance, several local divinities are considered to be former ancestors. The clearest case is Bhairava, currently called Bhailaḥdyaḥ in Newar, but also Āju, 'grandfather'. A former king of the Kathmandu Valley, Yalambara, is said to have been transformed into a god. Similarly, Mātṛkā goddesses are called 'Ajimā' in Newar, a title in which the word *aji*, 'grandmother', can be discerned. It seems that ancestors turn rapidly into deities, and that a link between the two is often present. Such merging between collective ancestrality and territorial gods is sometimes reported in ethnographic studies of Nepali tribal groups, such as the Gurung and Tamang (Strickland 1982; Toffin 1990). Evident parallels can also be drawn with cognatic societies of Tibet and Ladakh, where a similar situation has been described (Dollfus: 1989). Such various forms of 'territorial kinship' are important to document. It is to be hoped that further comparative research will be carried out on this topic in order to arrive at a better understanding of Himalayan symbolic representations.

Finally, I want to draw attention to some parallels with tribal groups in India. Among the Santal of Northeast India, for instance, the idiom of ancestrality is strongly attached to the figure of the local headmen, *nāike* (Carrin-Bouez 1986), representatives of the founders of the locality. In most cases, these chiefs are the officiants of the various cults celebrated in a nearby sacred grove that is linked with the creation and the mythical history of the territory. As such, they establish a connection between the first ancestors of the locality and its present-day existence. Among the Raj Gond of Central India, the deceased members of the clan, dwelling in the company of the clan deities, form part of a community which remains a unit, even though divided by the line separating life and death. As reported by Fürer-Haimendorf (1974: 1979), the rite by which the spirit of the deceased *(sanal)* is formally introduced to the other departed members of his clan is a crucial element of the funeral and memorial ceremonies. Not surprisingly, Raj Gond ancestral shrines often evolve into cult centres for the clan gods.

Among the Sora of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh on the other hand, the dead persons are difficult to forget and continue to interfere in the daily life of the villagers for a long time after their deaths. As vividly established by Piers Vitebsky (1993), they continue to return and to transmit their original conditions to others. Ancestors themselves live in different

places of the inhabited house and of the village. These sites play a prominent role in the creation of collective memory, in lineage segmentation and in the distribution of inheritance. Other similar cases could be cited among the Muria of Andhra Pradesh, Central India. Such examples attest to the strength of the connection between ancestrality and territoriality in the tribal world, even if it is materialised through different means than among the Newar. It would also be interesting to determine if this observation concerns only the tribal world or the Hindu low castes in South Asia as well.

7

The Balāmi Wood-Cutters and Sellers
Caste or ethnic group?

This book has so far focused on urban and rural caste groups living within the Kathmandu Valley. It is now time to turn to the opposition between the core and the periphery. This duality is clearly a crucial and structuring principle in Newar society. It overlaps the dichotomy between cities and villages, expands it and renders the overall social setting much more complex. 'Periphery' can be defined here as the intermediate space located between the Kathmandu Valley and the middle hills of Central Nepal and its forested areas. Socially and culturally, this transitional zone is inhabited not only by the Tamang and Parbatiyā castes, but also by small Newar communities or quasi-independent ethnic groups having intimate connections with Newars. These populations of limited size, composed mostly of farmers practising hill agriculture, live in a very different environment from Jyāpu

---

An initial version of this paper was presented at a Franco-Nepali conference held at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, April 2000. A very short version of that presentation was published as 'Les Balami, des bûcherons privés de forêt', in *Histoire et devenir des paysages en Himalaya. Représentations des milieux et gestion des resources du Népal et au Ladakh*. Edited by Joëlle Smadja, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2002, pp. 471-84. I express my gratitude to Joëlle Smadja and the Nepali participants at the Kathmandu meeting for their remarks on that first version. New material collected in 2004-2005 have been incorporated here.

peasants acclimatised to a plains ecosystem. They are not fully integrated into the Newar caste system either and raise interesting anthropological issues.

The spatial dimension of Newar society and culture

This dimension can be approached from two different viewpoints. Recent research in the Kathmandu Valley has shown that until about three decades ago, there was a clear relation between the distribution of the Newar urban population and their caste hierarchy. The Newar castes were spread out over the three former Malla royal capitals according to their position in the hierarchical system and their degree of purity. The Brāhmaṇs and the Chatharīya patrician families were concentrated around the royal palace—the focal point of the traditional Newar city. The untouchables lived and still live outside the city limits, near the cremation sites. Castes of low and middle status resided in the intermediary space, within the city boundaries, more or less close to the palace complex (Pradhan 1986). Such was the customary system. About 30 years ago, part of the Newar population of the old urban centres moved towards the periphery, along or near the Ring Road, constructed in the late 1970s. An increasing number of people now live in these areas, which were formerly used for agricultural purposes and which are not as densely populated as the centre. They have built western-style villas or bungalows, equipped with modern comforts and separated from each other by ornamental gardens. A new belt of contemporary-style dwellings has thus appeared around the old urban centres.

The second aspect of this spatial dimension, on which we will concentrate here and in the following chapter, relates to the edges of the Kathmandu Valley and groups such as the Pahari (Pihi), Putuwār, Balāmi, Teulā and Gwā which live in these zones. The Swāgumi of Pyangaon, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, are most probably linked to this set of populations, although they live primarily in a plains environment. These small quasi-ethnic groups each consist of a few thousand people, sometime less. They speak the Newar language or related dialects. However, they differ from the Newar of the Valley by their occupations which are or were until recently related to the forest. Besides, they possess some specific cultural features. Over the years, they have developed a remarkable sense of identity and exclusiveness which bring them close to being identified as separate ethnic groups. Interestingly, these populations are interconnected through a number of links which

have hardly been explored until now.[1]

Do these population units represent old tribal Newar or proto-Newar stock that was gradually pushed back towards the fringes of the Valley by new waves of immigrants?[2] Are they populations of different ethnic origin who gradually became 'Newarised' from contact with the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley while preserving certain characteristics?[3] Or, are they mixed populations, resulting from inter-caste or interethnic marriages with related groups like the Tamang? My research suggests that each of these three hypotheses bears some truth. According to their myth of origin, the Swāgumi, for example, are the offspring of a mixed union between a Newar king and a Tamang woman. Their social structure is nevertheless too identical to that of Newar farmers (Jyāpu) to be seen only as the result of a late process of 'Newarisation' (Chapter 4).

Economically, these groups have served as an intermediary for a long period of time between the Kathmandu Valley (1350 m), the centre of Newar civilisation, with its rich paddy lands and ancient urban localities, and nearby areas partly covered with forests. More precisely, these groups sell or exchange products from the forest or from the neighbouring hills. Thus, the Pahari are primarily basket-makers. They also sell wood in Lalitpur and in the bazaars of the district attached to this city. Until very recently, the Swāgumi used to make measure boxes, out of the bamboo they cut in the Inner Tarai and the Mahabharat range. They subsequently bartered them throughout the Valley for grain (such as paddy rice and wheat). The Putuwār sell red clay to plaster the floors and the walls of houses on certain dates of the ritual calendar (Dasaĩ and Tihār in particular). In addition, they trade in birds, wild berries and wood, and produce flattened rice. Otherwise, they traditionally carried the bridal palanquin during high-caste Newar marriages.[4] The Teulā specialise in the manufacture and the trade of flattened rice, but they also sell yeast (in which

1 For instance, Chattopadhyay (1980: 87) states that the Balāmi are a section of the Taṇḍukār (Khusaḥ) weaver caste. See also note 3 and 4 of this chapter.

2 In that case, these groups could have preserved very ancient elements of Newar civilisation. Nepali (1965: 175) writes: 'These two ethnic groups [Dwins and Balamis] along with the Pahari (...) suggest a substratum over which the present racial and cultural superstructure of the Newars has been built up.'

3 For D.R. Regmi (1966, ii : 754-755) : 'The Balhamis and Duins who have settled on the western suburb of the city of Kathmandu were the former Kahar castes from the North Indian Gangetic plains.' Unfortunately, the Nepali historian does not give any evidence of this statement. As is known, the Indian Kahar are traditionally bearers of *pālkī* palanquins.

4 It is from this function that their honorific title, Rājbāhak, is derived.

certain wild plants from the forest are used) to the urban populations. All these traditional occupations are at present nearly extinct or have totally disappeared. As for the Balāmi, whom I shall discuss here in detail, they were primarily woodcutters in the past, even if, as will be shown below, they had taken up other activities as well. Today, all these groups principally make their living from agriculture.

Localisation, myths of origin and dialect

The Balāmi[5] live in the north-west, the west and the south-west of the Kathmandu basin, in areas located both inside and outside the Valley proper. Schematically, one can distinguish four zones of Balāmi residence: 1) Rani Ban sector in the north-west (the villages of Kagatigaon, Dandagaon, Latabu;[6] the market-town of Balaju; Rani Ban and Sita Paila); 2) the sector of Thankot (Thankot, Tikanpur and Baligaon, within the Valley, in the west); 3) the sector of Chitlang-Palung in the west (the villages of Chitlang, Palung Markhu, Hompudol, Kubugaon, Kulekhani, behind the hills encircling the Valley, on the southern slopes of the Chandragiri mountain); and 4) the zone of Pharping, in the south-west of Kathmandu (Pharping, Thasigaon, Phulcok, Hundu, Sokhel-Pikhel). In most of these localities, the Balāmi live in settlements with mixed populations (Bāhuns, Chetrīs, various Newar castes). However, in Kagatigaon, a village of about 400 households (1998) located in Nuwakot District, below Kakani, i.e., outside the Valley itself, the Balāmi form the bulk of the population. To my knowledge, this is the only large village that is purely Balāmi. Another entirely Balāmi locality, albeit much smaller, is Hompudol (28 households), situated not far from Chitlang in Makwanpur District.[7]

In 1976, I estimated the population of this group at 2,800 people (Toffin 1981:65).[8] This figure was most probably underestimated as my experience of this minority group was at that time much more limited than today. If the annual rate of increase of the global Nepali population

5 The Parbatiyā of the surroundings areas more frequently pronounce this: Bwalāmi.

6 Another Balāmi village, called Sanagaon, has been reported to me, further west, in the south of Dhading District. Some Balāmi would also live in Biratnagar, in the eastern Tarai.

7 Ethnographic data was collected among the Balāmi over two periods of time. The first in February and September 1976. At that time, I visited several Balāmi villages in the area of Chitlang and spent some days in Hondu, near Pharping. Research was carried out again on an occasional basis between 1999 and 2005, particularly in Kagatigaon and Phulcok.

8 In 1966, Rosser gave 50 as being the number of Balāmi households in the Kathmandu Valley.

have hardly been explored until now.[1]

Do these population units represent old tribal Newar or proto-Newar stock that was gradually pushed back towards the fringes of the Valley by new waves of immigrants?[2] Are they populations of different ethnic origin who gradually became 'Newarised' from contact with the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley while preserving certain characteristics?[3] Or, are they mixed populations, resulting from inter-caste or interethnic marriages with related groups like the Tamang? My research suggests that each of these three hypotheses bears some truth. According to their myth of origin, the Swāgumi, for example, are the offspring of a mixed union between a Newar king and a Tamang woman. Their social structure is nevertheless too identical to that of Newar farmers (Jyāpu) to be seen only as the result of a late process of 'Newarisation' (Chapter 4).

Economically, these groups have served as an intermediary for a long period of time between the Kathmandu Valley (1350 m), the centre of Newar civilisation, with its rich paddy lands and ancient urban localities, and nearby areas partly covered with forests. More precisely, these groups sell or exchange products from the forest or from the neighbouring hills. Thus, the Pahari are primarily basket-makers. They also sell wood in Lalitpur and in the bazaars of the district attached to this city. Until very recently, the Swāgumi used to make measure boxes, out of the bamboo they cut in the Inner Tarai and the Mahabharat range. They subsequently bartered them throughout the Valley for grain (such as paddy rice and wheat). The Putuwār sell red clay to plaster the floors and the walls of houses on certain dates of the ritual calendar (Dasaĩ and Tihār in particular). In addition, they trade in birds, wild berries and wood, and produce flattened rice. Otherwise, they traditionally carried the bridal palanquin during high-caste Newar marriages.[4] The Teulā specialise in the manufacture and the trade of flattened rice, but they also sell yeast (in which

1 For instance, Chattopadhyay (1980: 87) states that the Balāmi are a section of the Taṇḍukār (Khusaḥ) weaver caste. See also note 3 and 4 of this chapter.

2 In that case, these groups could have preserved very ancient elements of Newar civilisation. Nepali (1965: 175) writes: 'These two ethnic groups [Dwins and Balamis] along with the Pahari (...) suggest a substratum over which the present racial and cultural superstructure of the Newars has been built up.'

3 For D.R. Regmi (1966, ii : 754-755) : 'The Balhamis and Duins who have settled on the western suburb of the city of Kathmandu were the former Kahar castes from the North Indian Gangetic plains.' Unfortunately, the Nepali historian does not give any evidence of this statement. As is known, the Indian Kahar are traditionally bearers of *pālkī* palanquins.

4 It is from this function that their honorific title, Rājbāhak, is derived.

certain wild plants from the forest are used) to the urban populations. All these traditional occupations are at present nearly extinct or have totally disappeared. As for the Balāmi, whom I shall discuss here in detail, they were primarily woodcutters in the past, even if, as will be shown below, they had taken up other activities as well. Today, all these groups principally make their living from agriculture.

Localisation, myths of origin and dialect

The Balāmi[5] live in the north-west, the west and the south-west of the Kathmandu basin, in areas located both inside and outside the Valley proper. Schematically, one can distinguish four zones of Balāmi residence: 1) Rani Ban sector in the north-west (the villages of Kagatigaon, Dandagaon, Latabu;[6] the market-town of Balaju; Rani Ban and Sita Paila); 2) the sector of Thankot (Thankot, Tikanpur and Baligaon, within the Valley, in the west); 3) the sector of Chitlang-Palung in the west (the villages of Chitlang, Palung Markhu, Hompudol, Kubugaon, Kulekhani, behind the hills encircling the Valley, on the southern slopes of the Chandragiri mountain); and 4) the zone of Pharping, in the south-west of Kathmandu (Pharping, Thasigaon, Phulcok, Hundu, Sokhel-Pikhel). In most of these localities, the Balāmi live in settlements with mixed populations (Bāhuns, Chetrīs, various Newar castes). However, in Kagatigaon, a village of about 400 households (1998) located in Nuwakot District, below Kakani, i.e., outside the Valley itself, the Balāmi form the bulk of the population. To my knowledge, this is the only large village that is purely Balāmi. Another entirely Balāmi locality, albeit much smaller, is Hompudol (28 households), situated not far from Chitlang in Makwanpur District.[7]

In 1976, I estimated the population of this group at 2,800 people (Toffin 1981:65).[8] This figure was most probably underestimated as my experience of this minority group was at that time much more limited than today. If the annual rate of increase of the global Nepali population

5 The Parbatiyā of the surroundings areas more frequently pronounce this: Bwalāmi.

6 Another Balāmi village, called Sanagaon, has been reported to me, further west, in the south of Dhading District. Some Balāmi would also live in Biratnagar, in the eastern Tarai.

7 Ethnographic data was collected among the Balāmi over two periods of time. The first in February and September 1976. At that time, I visited several Balāmi villages in the area of Chitlang and spent some days in Hondu, near Pharping. Research was carried out again on an occasional basis between 1999 and 2005, particularly in Kagatigaon and Phulcok.

8 In 1966, Rosser gave 50 as being the number of Balāmi households in the Kathmandu Valley.

is extrapolated to this figure, 30 years later even that population would be about 7,000. In fact, the Balāmi population today (2005) must range between 10,000 and 15,000. The difficulty in giving a more precise number lies in the fact that nowhere does a precise census exist. For the Census Department investigators, the Balāmi do not constitute a distinct group; they are included within the Newar. Besides, as will be shown later, another problem is that some Balāmi intermarry with other groups and subsequently adopt different surnames.

The origins of the Balāmi are quite obscure. This group does not have any clear and detailed myth describing their founding ancestors or explaining their current geographical distribution. In Kagatigaon, the following legend is narrated:

> When he was a child, Prithvi Narayan Shah killed one of his playmates. His father became very angry. He decided to have his son killed. But Prithvi Narayan succeeded in fleeing. He took refuge in the family of the Malla king of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu Valley and established with him a ritual friendship relation (Nep. *mit)*. He remained in that place for two years, then returned to Gorkha. There, he went to hide in the temple of Goraknāth. The god asked him what he wished to do in the future. Prince Prithvi Narayan answered that he wanted to become king. Gorakhnāth then spit in his hands and asked Prithvi Narayan to swallow his spittle. Disgusted, the prince only took a little in his mouth. This is why, it is said, Prithvi Narayan became the sovereign of only one small territory. Much later, as king of Gorkha, he managed to conquer Kathmandu Valley which he desired so much. During the conquest, he was helped by the military guards of his chief Brahmanical preceptor, the *rājguru*, called the *gurujiko palṭan*. He asked the band which accompanied these guards to play the *dhimay* drum and the *bhusyāḥ* cymbals in front of the Malla capitals. The music was so loud that the Malla kings became afraid: 'The armies of the Gorkha king must be extremely large,' they thought. And they capitulated. While this was going on, a quarrel erupted within the Malla palace in Bhaktapur. Part of the royal family fled to Balaju, in the west of the Valley, with their tutelary goddess, Mahālakṣmī. A child was born at this site. He was called Balāmi, after the name of the locality. He is the ancestor of the Balāmi. A little later, he founded the village of Kagatigaon.

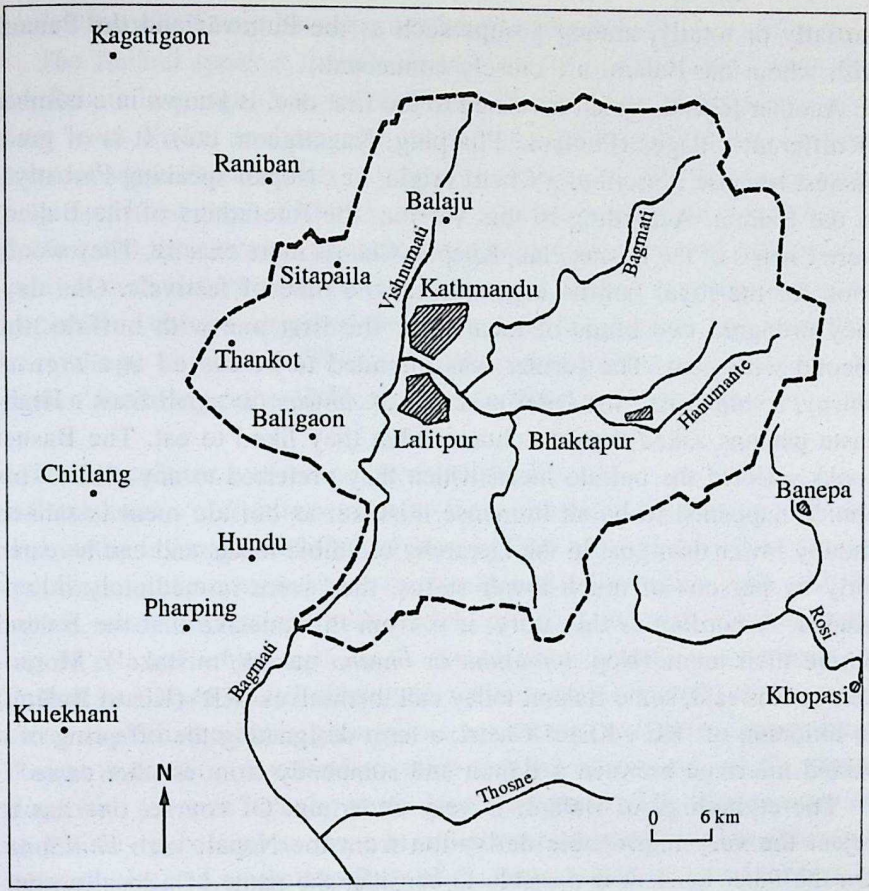


Fig. 8. **Main Balāmi villages**

The other myths collected in the field are much more fragmentary. They mention, as in the preceding tale, a war inside the Kathmandu Valley. At the time of an attack, the ancestors of the Balāmi were taken by surprise while eating their meal of rice. Frightened, they fled and dropped the sacred thread *(janai)* which high-caste people hang from their ears during their meal. Another story mentions a Malla king (some mention Jayasthiti) who asked their ancestor to choose between a dish of spicy buffalo and a dish of salted goat. The Balāmi chose the former. As this meat is considered less pure than goat meat, the king withdrew their right to wear the sacred thread. Like the first legend, these two tales point to a royal origin, degradation to a lower rank, and, in two cases out of three, a link with the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in the 18th century. Significantly, the same elements are founded,

partially or totally, among groups such as the Putuwār and the Pahari, with whom the Balāmi are closely connected.

Another legend, which is related to the first one, is known in a number of different villages (Phulcok, Pharping, Kagatigaon, etc). It is of great interest because it ascribes a Chetrī origin, i.e., Nepali-speaking Parbatiyā, to the Balāmi. According to this version, the forefathers of the Balāmi were Chetrīs of the Basnet clan, Khaptar Chetrīs more exactly. They would cook for the royal family, especially at the time of festivals. One day, they prepared two kinds of meat dish: the first one with buffalo, the second with goat. The former was intended to be served at a *tagwaḥ bhway*, a 'big feast', the latter at a *cigwaḥ bhway*, a 'small feast'. High-caste persons asked them to choose what they liked to eat. The Basnet cooks selected the buffalo meat, which they preferred to any other. This choice happened to be an immense mistake; as buffalo meat is ranked ritually lower than goat in the hierarchy of edible meats and can be eaten only by persons of much lower status, they were immediately down-graded. According to this story, it is from this mistake that the Balāmi derive their name (Nep. *bhulāunu* or *bhulnu* means 'mistake'). Moreover, so it is said, some Balāmi today call themselves 'KB' (Khatrī Balāmi) in imitation of 'KC', Khatrī Chetrī, a term designating the offspring of a mixed marriage between a Bāhun and somebody from another caste.[9]

The etymology of Balāmi is very uncertain. Of course, one has to reject the very improbable derivation from the Nepali verb *bhulāunu*. On the other hand, it is possible to consider the name of a locality; perhaps Balaju, which is mentioned in one of the above versions as this population's centre of origin and around which some Balāmi villages are still concentrated. We may also think of the Sanskrit word *bala*, 'robust, strong', which could be linked to one of their presumed characteristics as wood-cutters. This later etymology is explicitly given by some informants: the *balāmi* title would have been given to them by a Malla king of Bhaktapur because of the strength they demonstrated at some temple building sites. According to others, the Sanskrit derivation from *bala* would be related to their bravery at war, when serving in the armies of Malla kings. Let us finally mention a more extravagant folk-etymology view prevalent in Chitlang: 'Balāmi' is derived from the Newar word *bā-lā*, 'half-way', in reference to a woman from the group who deliv-

9 A variant of this tale holds that the origins of not only the Balāmi but also the Gāmal and the Putuwār can be traced to this feast.

ered a baby half-way between her house and the fields.

The Balāmi speak a specific dialect, nearer to colloquial Newar than the Pahari language. Yet, linguists do not recognise this dialect as distinct from Newar (perhaps for lack of data).[10] From a communication point of view, the situation is similar in Pyangaon. The Newar from the neighbourhood have difficulty understanding conversations among the Balāmi. On the contrary, the latter can easily express themselves in colloquial Newar if they want to. Besides, some lexical variations of minor importance can be observed from one zone to another, and even from one village to another. The residents of Kagatigaon, for instance, are known for being rather difficult to understand as they speak fast.

Material culture and economic resources

Balāmi houses are quite similar to those inhabited by other groups settled in the hill region of Central Nepal. They are generally two-storeyed buildings, with separate sheds for the animals. The walls, built with dry stones, sometimes mixed with bricks, are plastered with a natural coating of red and white earth, as is usually done among the Tamang and Parbatiyā Bāhun-Chetrī. The roof, traditionally thatched, is nowadays covered with the more prestigious corrugated galvanised iron sheets bought at bazaars. A veranda is often laid out on one side of the ground floor with an open balcony at the level just above. The windows are not so lavishly decorated as those in old Newar architecture. The kitchen is generally located on the top floor of the house, under the roof timbers, as is the custom among the Newar. But it might be, in some cases, situated on the ground floor. The houses are rarely attached to each other and are not organised according to any clear structure.

The Balāmi depend mainly on agriculture. They are small landowner farmers whose principal income is based on the cultivation of finger millet *(Eleusine coracana)*, maize, wheat, rice, mustard and various vegetables, like the majority of Nepali peasants from the neighbouring hills. There is very little irrigated land with rice cultivation and it is restricted to the low-lying areas. In Kagatigaon (Nuwakot District), rice accounts for only 30 per cent of the crop. As elsewhere in the region, these fields produce only two crops a year: rice in the hot and rainy season, and

10 Driem (2001, vol. 2: 758) mentions five Newar dialects: the one in Kathmandu and Lalitpur, the one in Bhaktapur, Pahari, the Chitlang dialect and the one in Dolakha. This rough presentation needs further investigation in the field.

wheat in winter. Most land is *pākho*, i.e., non-irrigated. Maize and mustard, or maize and finger millet are cultivated together on the same piece of land. Poultry, especially ducks, cows and buffaloes (an animal which calls for much more care than bovines) are also reared. Pigs are usually forbidden in villages. The dung of domestic animals is used to manure the fields.

By and large, the agricultural techniques used belong to the rural world of the hills rather than to the Newar peasantry of the Kathmandu Valley. The land is ploughed with an ard (Balāmi dialect: *sāu*, New. *sā*, *sau)* pulled by a pair of bullocks. On irrigated land, the ard is drawn three times a year: the first time after harvesting paddy, the second, after the wheat harvest, and lastly in May, before the rice seedling transplantation. Iron ploughshares of different sizes are employed where needed. Muddy soil, for instance, require shorter ploughshares. For paddy cultivation, hoeing is also done. On non-irrigated land, the ard is drawn only twice a year. In all cases, ploughing goes hand in hand with digging with the traditional digging tool specific to the Kathmandu Valley (Nep. *kodālo)*.

In most of the villages studied, the Balāmi are compelled to give a share of their cereal harvest to two kinds of specialists with whom they are closely linked: the Newar Nau barbers (Nāpit) and the Parbatiyā Kāmī blacksmiths. The former cut the hair of the men or shave their heads in the event of pollution. The latter manufacture and maintain all their iron tools.[11] In the village of Phulcok, each family gives ten *pāthī* measures of paddy (about 25 kg) and an equivalent quantity in maize to its customary barber and Kāmī blacksmith. The Kāmī receive their share in the field itself at the time of threshing. Besides, they are entitled to gather the paddy grains that have fallen on the ground. These relationships between peasants and service castes are transmitted according to the usual hereditary model of *jajmānī* in this part of the world (Chapter 5).

Balāmi farmers rarely produce the food required for survival over a whole year. In Phulcok, Kumar, an energetic man of about 30 years old, is one exception. In 2005, he owned one hectare of irrigated land and a little more of non-irrigated land, scattered all over the cultivated territory. Such an amount easily meets the annual requirements of a family

11 A similar practice is found in Pyangaon (Chapter 5). Contrary to the barbers, the Kāmī blacksmith has no ritual functions to fulfil towards the Balāmi. The share given to him by the villagers is called *kāla bhāg*.

of five persons. He even sells part of his rice in the market. Tamang wage-labourers were working in his fields. But this is clearly an exceptional case; the great majority of Balāmi peasants possess less than half a hectare for one family, all categories of lands considered. This provides food only for six or seven months of the year. Consequently, they need to look for complementary resources (see below).

Apart from this ancient agricultural activity, the Balāmi were traditionally woodcutters and firewood-sellers, at least the ones living near forested areas all around the ridge encircling the Kathmandu Valley. Until the 1970s, most of them cut and collected wood in nearby forests to sell in the bazaars. At that time, the urban population of the Valley used to cook their food using wood as fuel, and firewood came from the market. The more or less dense forests exploited by the Balāmi were located near their villages: Nagarjung Ban, Mata Tirtha Ban, and Rani Ban (which is said to have been established in the early 1600s for a Malla queen). All these belonged for a long time to the State or the royal palace. They are surrounded by walls and are watched over by forest guards, *ban pāle*, as well as by the army. It seems that access, relatively free at the beginning of the century, became more restricted from the 1970s onwards. It has again become more flexible today. In September 1999, information collected in the field revealed nine check-posts in the north-west sector of the Valley. Admission was authorised for only two days per week for dead wood and ten days every six months for green wood. For each load of wood taken, a tax of 25 rupees is levied. But compromise seems possible at several places. 'It is necessary to remain on good terms with the forest guards,' I was told. Cases of theft were reported to me. They were severely punished by the authorities.

The three varieties most sought after by the Balāmi are: *Schima Wallichii* (Nep. *cilaune)*, *Alnus nepalensis* (Nep. *utis)*, *Castanopsis indica* (nep. *kaṭus*, New. *simāri sī)*. Men collect, cut and sell the wood. No system of mutual assistance, *parma* (New. *bwalā-jyā)*, exists, as is the case for some intense agricultural work. Everything is done on a family basis. In the forest, they used to walk in straw sandals. Today, thongs and sneakers are worn. The principal tool is an axe, *pā* (New.), made by Kāmī blacksmiths. The women sell loads of wood in town. In Kagatigaon, they get up at around 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, leave without eating and reach Balaju market-place after a three-hour walk. Wood is tied together by means of cords and is carried on the back. The load (40 to 45 kg) is sold for about 80 rupees (1999). The women are back in their

village by about midday. They then eat their first meal of the day. Much more is sold in the winter, when people are free from agricultural chores, than during the rainy season when activities in the fields are in full swing. The festivals of Dasaĩ and Tihār, when great quantities of firewood are required for cooking and preparing alcoholic drinks out of rice or finger millet, are peak periods.

The Balāmi were not the only ones to supply the urban centres of the Kathmandu Valley with firewood. The Putuwār of Halchok in the north, the Pahari in the south and the Tamang in the east and the west also sold and still sell significant quantities in the Valley.[12] In the Pharping area, it is the Tamang of the vicinity who sell wood (mostly, conifers and rhododendrons). The wood is carried by children, 13 to 16 years old, as well as by women. It should be pointed out that the Balāmi seem to have never made charcoal, a speciality of the Tamang living in the surrounding areas. Like firewood, this product was essential to the urban zones. Surprisingly, the Balāmi do not seem to have hunted much either in the past, save some pheasants or jungle fowl (New. *guṃkhā, guṃgā)*, fairly common in the nearby forests. As we will see below, they nonetheless worship a god of hunting, called Sikāri.

Today, many Balāmi have given up their traditional woodcutting activity. An adequate supply of fuel-wood is no longer available to satisfy the needs of the Kathmandu Valley. In fact, the Valley's population has multiplied five times since 1960 and the regulations against deforestation are more and more enforced. Firewood was gradually replaced by kerosene, then by bottled gas. Only the Balāmi of Kagatigaon and Rani Ban still sell wood on a relatively large scale. In the first of these localities, the majority of the families still continue to convey about fifteen loads of firewood a month to Balaju, especially during the winter. Other Balāmi have completely stopped this activity.

Porterage was formerly another major occupation of this group. The Balāmi carried goods along the Bhimpedi-Kathmandu track, along the old footpath from the Kathmandu Valley to India where all transportation is still ensured by porters for a considerable part of the way. They also served as coolies on the direct track crossing Chandragiri mountain and Thankot, as well as another, further east, passing by the small town

12 A group of Jyāpu, called Bwasi, also formerly specialised in sawing timber (New. *sĩ chāygu)*, especially for the construction of Rana palaces. They live mostly in the village of Basigaon, near Satungal. Accordingly, some of them also cut trees in the Inner Tarai during the winter for this purpose.

of Pharping and joining the first one again in Kulekhani. Their localisation in these two areas should be viewed in relation to this activity.[13] The Balāmi obligations to the state during the Rana Period are undoubtedly related to these old occupations. Thus, from Kulekhani to Thankot, and vice versa on the way down to the Tarai, they carried chains and other materials for the state-owned elephants who were brought to Kathmandu for royal ceremonies. They also had to provide the fodder necessary to feed these pachyderms and carry the official mail. Sometimes, it was even their duty to transport the bags accompanying prisoner convoys. In exchange, the Balāmi peasants were exempted from paying land tax on their non-irrigated *pākho* fields.

Today, these commitments have been abolished.[14] The Balāmi, however, still make use of the foot trail leading to India. Those from Kulekhani, for instance, are known to be involved in the very lucrative buffalo business that takes place between the Tarai and the Kathmandu Valley. During a survey carried out in Chitlang in 1976, several cases of temporary winter migrations were also reported to me. The local Balāmi at that time spent December to March further to the south in the Tarai, or even on the other side of the border, in the Indian state of Bihar. In these hot areas, they bought mustard, tobacco, rice, maize, and various vegetables which they sold at a higher price in Kathmandu Valley. Some opened temporary shops near Chitwan and set up business. Others were employed as masons and carpenters. In 1999, a *dakaḥami* mason and a *sīkaḥmi* carpenter earned 100 rupees[15] a day, plus food. All these temporary migrations still take place today. As a rule, the Balāmi do not have enough land, or not enough good land, to earn their livelihood from. They need and have always needed additional sources of income.

In some zones, the Balāmi have specialised in arboriculture. This is

13 Porterage along this main axis seriously decreased after the construction of the ropeway from Dhumsing to Kispidi, under Chandra Shamsher Rana, around 1925, thanks to the assistance of British engineers. This ropeway is today out of use. The second footpath which starts in Pharping (four hours' walk from this market town to Bhimpedi) is today considerably disused, with the exception of locals.

14 These obligations were called *jāri-beṭhi*. Some informants also reported to me that the Balāmi were formerly compelled to maintain the foot trail from Chitlang-Markhu, along this important commercial and strategic road. In one of his books (1964, vol. 3: 154), M.C. Regmi mentioned the expression *bala rakam* to designate the old obligation, during the Rana quasi-feudal period, of carrying several types of goods for the government, including loads of wood. The word *bala* must be related in one way or another to the ethnonym Balāmi.

15 About 1.5 Euros.

the case of the villages scattered around Pharping, a small township in the south-west corner of the Valley. This region is famous for its pear, tamarind and mandarin orange trees. The trees are planted on the border of the plots of land situated just above the village. Fruit is sold in the urban open markets, especially in Kalimati, not far from the centre of Kathmandu city. Until 1990, the Balāmi themselves used to carry the fruit to the towns. Today, they prefer to deal with intermediaries and wholesalers.

In 2002, a young Balāmi man living in Phulcok village began the production of an alternative fuel to be used instead of wood and kerosene. He started producing small bricks made of earth, grasses, a plant called *ban mārā (Eupatorium adenophorum)* in Nepali, and other biomass residue. These briquettes are cylindrical in shape (130 mm in diameter and 90 mm in height) and are pierced through with about twenty holes, which are used to insert the briquettes in a small cylindrical stove made of soft steel sheets. The alveolar shape of the holes allow the oxygen necessary for combustion to circulate. This method has the advantage of eliminating smoke and bad smells. At present, the stove serves more as a heater than for cooking food. In 2005, the production of this cottage industry was limited to 25,000 briquettes a year. The small bricks are sold for 15 rupees a piece in the centre of Kathmandu city and in Pharping. This ingenious Balāmi travelled extensively in Europe and worked as a technician in Germany for some time before launching his venture. This new activity could be a way of reviving the local economy and a good prospect for the future.[16]

Caste and lineage organisation

Newars consider the Balāmi as members of their ethnic community, even if they situate them on the margins. The Balāmi, on their part, are slightly reluctant to be viewed totally as Newars. As will be shown in the following pages, these two groups share the same culture, the same basic principles of social organisation. But the Balāmi feel that they are somewhat different. When asked: 'To which caste [*jāt*] do you belong?', (*'chu jāt?'*, New.), they answer: *'Balāmi jāḥt'* (local dialect). This feeling is accentuated by the specific features of their dialect and by their geographically peripheral position from the core of the Kathmandu Valley. In addition,

16 Bamboo is processed by men. Women do not weave. Surprisingly, it seems that no weaving tradition exists among this group either.

as stressed above, their houses and their lifestyle appear to be more related to Nepali hill people, Tamangs and Parbatiyā for instance, than to Newars. From this viewpoint, and only from this viewpoint, they are quite 'Nepalised'. Balāmi women, for instance, do not wear the gold nose ornament *phuli*, typical of the hills,[17] but they frequently wear the *tilhari* necklace with its distinctive golden barrel and *ḍhuṅgri* earrings worn inside the ear pavilion. These ornaments are characteristics of Bāhun-Chetrī or Tamang women living in the hilly districts.[18] All these elements mark them off as different from other Newars.

Which position do the Balāmi occupy in the traditional Nepali caste system? High Parbatiyā castes, Upādhyā, Jaisī, Chetrī, invariably situate them at a rank approximately equal to that of Tamangs, i.e., a pure group of tribal origin, placed at a rather low level in the hierarchy, allowing the Balāmi access to their house. In the Newar caste system, the Balāmi come below the Jyāpu farmers. They are situated nearly at the same level as Gathu gardeners, Putuwār palanquin-bearers, Tepay and Desar peasants, and Taṇḍukār weavers. They are, however, considered superior to Citrakār painters, Mānandhar oil-pressers, and are clearly differentiated from impure castes from whom water is not accepted.[19]

The Balāmi eat rice prepared by the Jyāpu, but refuse rice cooked by the castes with whom they are grouped hierarchically. They even maintain that Putuwārs eat rice cooked by them. The latter claim the opposite. In addition, Paharis and Balāmis do not eat cooked rice from each other. Purification rituals, such as shaving the head and the eyebrows after pollution (at funerals, for instance) are carried out by Nau barbers, as is the case of high and middle Newar castes, including the Swāgumi in Pyangaon (Chapter 5). Nail-cutting services provided by barber women are also crucial. As we know, these are essential criteria within the hierarchical system. In contrast, the umbilical cord of the baby is cut at birth by a member of the family and not by a member of the barber or butcher castes. The same custom is followed by the Putuwār. Besides, Nau bar-

17 Newar women never wear the *phuli* ornament (cf. Manandhar 1998).

18 These two ornaments can also be worn by Newar women, especially from Hindu castes, but they are more typical of the Parbatiyā and Tamang.

19 In his study of the 1854 Muluki Ain, Höfer (1979: 142) mentions a text written twenty years after 1854 which lists the Balāmi among the 'Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers', i.e., the ethnic groups of lower status such as Chepāng, Kumhāl, Sunuwār, Danuwār, Tāmāṅg, etc. The Pahari are also mentioned in this list, to the remarkable difference of the Newar pure castes which have never been included in this category.

bers are called at every significant life-cycle ritual, especially at initiation rites and weddings. They are given a share of the feast (New. *bhway bhāg)* which is served at the time of every important domestic ceremony.

The relationships between the Balāmi and other castes are characterised by the same ambiguity. On the one hand, the Balāmi require the service of the Nau barbers. They even need the ritual services performed by Kusle musicians and tailors on the seventh day of funerals. In addition, they call Citrakār painters to renovate and repaint their dance masks during local festivals, as well as Hindu and Buddhist priests for their funeral ceremonies (see below). In relation to these castes specialised in ritual functions, the Balāmi behave like a dominant caste exercising power at the local level, owning lands and distributing crops. The situation is somewhat similar to the position of the Jyāpu within the villages they dominate and to the Swāgumi in Pyangaon.

On the other hand, the Balāmi have no specific ritual functions to fulfil towards high Newar castes. Their only religious speciality within the all-encompassing Newar society concerns the masked dances *(dyaḥ pyākhā*, lit.: 'god dances') they perform at certain dates of the religious calendar. It must be stressed that these sacred dances are staged not only at the inner caste level, within the Balāmi community, but, more importantly, in multi-castes contexts, in the presence of other populations or castes. Interestingly, these dances are always presented as an obligation that the Balāmi have to fulfil towards the local society and a contribution to the global socio-cosmic order. In this respect, their position is very similar to that of the Putuwār, whose members are often professional dancers (Toffin 2006), and of the inhabitants of Pyangaon. They act like kings in their kingdoms. Interestingly, these ritual dances imply wild deities who drink the blood of the animals that are sacrificed to them and who are closely connected to the dangerous world of the forest (Toffin 2005: 191-196). Like the Putuwār from Halchok village who dance in Kathmandu during the Indra Jātrā festival, the Balāmi thus embody the uncivilised and dangerous aspects of nature and make it possible to tame the wilderness.

Their social organisation is not basically different from that of other Newars. Their patrilineage, called *kawāḥ* or *thar*, does not go back far genealogically (three to four generations) and is strictly exogamous. Sexual relations between agnates are considered a major offence, somewhat similar to incest. The general public highly disapproves of such incidents. The guilty couple is immediately expelled from their descent

group and from the village. The distant agnates are called *tāpā phuki*, the close agnates *syā phuki*. The former mourn for only a few days following the death of one of their members; the latter, for 45 days.

Once a year, the group meets to worship its lineage deity. The god is usually represented by a diadem or another ornament in the shape of a crown garnished with petals and spirals. Its name is actually not concealed from outsiders. In Phulcok village for instance, the Silāmi kinship group propitiates Nārāyaṇ and the Chelāmi worship Bhairava. The ceremony falls generally during the month of Baiśākh (April-May), preferably the third day of the bright fortnight (which is known by the name of Akṣaya Tritīyā), otherwise a Sunday or a Thursday of the bright fortnight. In the event of mourning within the lineage, the offering can be postponed until the sixth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jeṣṭha (Sithi Nakhaḥ), a holy day devoted to the god Kumār. The cult, *degu pūjā* in local Newar,[20] takes place on a field, outside the village itself. It is sometimes followed by a feast. Patrilineal kin groups frequently distinguish between each other according to the type of offerings made to the lineage deity: non-vegetarian or vegetarian, *madhi* (or *mari)* flat bread or curd, goat or duck meat, etc. Those who sacrifice an animal on that occasion gather after the ceremony. They indulge in a special feast called *sī kāḥ bhway*, during which the head of the animal is eaten in a sacred atmosphere. Only male elders participate in this ceremonial meal, typical of the Newar.

As is the case among a number of Newar groups, especially the Jyāpu farmers, each of these lineages has a name. Here is the list I collected in Pharping and Hundu: Takhechemi, Yochemi, Wothumi, Tagwaḥmi, Itapu, Swāgumi, Silāmi. In Palung, the list was as follows: Takhechemi, Lamomi, Naycabumi, Nuichemi, Nasuchemi, Pitchemi, Kotchemi, Tahachemi, Tharsumi, Khwāṃchemi, Dichemi, Gwachemi. The hamlet of Phulcok, consisting of about 650 Balāmi individuals and located not far from Pharping, is divided mainly between the Sonāmi (interestingly also called Swāgumi) and Silāmi descent groups. The word *chē*, which appears in several of these names, means 'house' in Newar; *mi* indicates 'people'. These units are often localised in space: a hamlet, a grouping, an alignment of houses. Elsewhere, the intermingling is such that the units of residence do not correspond to the descent groups. Only

20 *Degu*: from Skt. *deva* + *kulika* : 'a small portable temple', *A Dictionary of Classical Newari*, p. 231.

the memory of an ancestral deity, *kul chẽ*, remains.

In Kagatigaon, the local Balāmi population is divided into two groups: Takhāmi (or Wotāmi) and Kwakhāmi (or Chwāsami). These expressions mean 'people from the upper part' and 'people from the lower part'. They do not correspond, or rather no longer correspond, to a division of the territory into two moieties, upper and lower, as exists in all Newar localities, urban and rural (Chapters 3 and 6) (Toffin 1996*b*). These two groupings operate mainly as two exogamous units which exchange women. 'It is like *gotra*,' somebody told me. The Takhāmi and Kwakhāmi do not have any religious existence as such and they do not have their own specific cult. The only difference, put forth by all informants, consists in the fact that the former leave their funerary offerings on the seventh day following the death of one of their members in front of a Gaṇeśa temple, whereas the latter present theirs to the spirits of the crossings, *chwāsa*, dangerous beings responsible for diseases and various disorders. No hierarchy apparently exists between the two units, in spite of the etymology of their name. Are they vestiges of an old dual organisation, as can be found elsewhere in the Nepal Himalaya (Allen 1975), or a late duplication of the *gotra* Hindu system, or a mixture of both? The question is difficult to answer. This morphological structure seems, in all cases, to be related to the same dualistic elements which exist among the Pahari (Chapter 8).

Marriage in the agnatic line is prohibited in principle up to the seventh generation. In reality, this ban ceases to apply as soon as the memory of a kinship tie disappears. In the uterine line, cross-cousin marriages are forbidden, as is the rule among Newars. Yet, matrimonial unions between cross-relatives of the third or fourth level generation are not uncommon (Chapter 4). As everywhere in Nepal, relationships between agnates and matrilineal kinsmen are extremely strong. The maternal uncle, in particular, is bound to perform frequent ritual duties in favour of his sister's son. For instance, he has to cut the hair of his nephew on the occasion of the tonsure ritual, *busākhā* (Nep. *chewar)*. In reality, he simply cuts the hair with scissors, after which the barber shaves the head. (See also Chapter 1 on this subject.)

The Balāmi kinship terminology does not basically differ from those used by Newars, neither in its structure nor in its lexical morphology. Here are the main linguistics dissimilarities: *ma* for mother (instead of *mā)*; *camā* for the mother's younger sister and the second wife of the husband (instead of the more usual Newar *ciri mā)*; *keukā* for the fa-

ther's younger brother (instead of *kakā)*; *dhunbā* for the father's elder brother; *dwamā* for the wife of the father's elder brother; *manā* or *mwamā* for the wife of the father's younger brother (instead of *maleju)*; *mana* for the husband of the father's sister. The husband is called *pumi* (in Chitlang); the wife, *pibi* (in Chitlang, *bri* elsewhere); the elder brother's wife, *peta* (or *peto)*; the younger brother's wife, *munā* (or *mumhā)*; the nephew, *bhi* (instead of *bhincā).*[21]

In theory, the Balāmi marry among themselves. This is still the rule in Kagatigaon, the largest village in the group, quite isolated in comparison to neighbouring settlements. In this locality, marriages are made primarily between Balāmis from the same village. Some women come from Chitlang or Pharping, but no girl from Kagatigaon marries outside the settlement. In Baligaon (20 Balāmi households in 2001), where I also carried out a survey on this, one finds a great number of unions with the Balāmi of surrounding areas and other more distant localities. In the region of Pharping, about 40 per cent of marriages are contracted outside the village.

For a long time, Balāmi women have been marrying outside the caste. The children resulting from such unions are called *lawa* (or *lawaḥ),*[22] 'mixed-blood', or Nagarkoṭi.[23] The Balāmi regard them to be of lower rank and avoid marrying them. On this subject, it is worth noting the expression Sāno Balāmi, which means 'Small Balāmi' (or Gāma, a word derived from New. *gāṃ*, village). It has a very pejorative connotation, and is used to indicate groups of families of mixed blood, in particular the children born from a union between a Balāmi girl and a Jyāpu man. These groups are also called Nagarkoṭi. They live principally in Sita Paila, in Mata Tirtha, and Sokhel-Pikhel, near Dakhinkali. They are much influenced by Parbatiyā culture. Some do not even speak Newar. Curiously, some call themselves Udās, from the name of the Buddhist Newar caste of merchants and craftsmen.

Inter-caste or inter-ethnic marriages are at present on the rise. Most are with the Newar, the Parbatiyā, as well as with the Tamang. If the man

21 Concerning the Newar kinship terminolgy, see Toffin (1984: 167-172), and Gellner and Quigley (1995: 329-331).

22 In Pharping, I recorded the following family names: Barmhū Lawa, Bare Lawa, Tāmā Lawa and Seṃ Lawa, depending on the caste of the father.

23 Nagarkoṭi is a word currently used on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley to designate the offspring of inter-ethnic unions between Newars and Tamangs. It is under this term that the Newars formerly used to enrol in the Nepali army (otherwise, they were barred from recruitment).

is himself Balāmi and the wife belongs to another group of superior status (Chetrī or Śreṣṭha for instance), the child will be accepted in the father's lineage and main *guthi* association. He will therefore be recognised as entirely Balāmi. The mother, on the other hand, will be excluded and kept out of all major internal ceremonies. If the mother is Tamang, i.e., from a status considered inferior in the caste hierarchy, the issue is more problematic. In theory, the male child will not be recognised as Balāmi. He will be called Nagarkoṭi and will not be integrated in the commensal rules of eating, drinking and smoking with his father's group.

Life-cycle rituals and funeral associations

Life-cycle rituals are accompanied by the same ceremonies as among most Newars. Each of them marks the access of the person concerned to a new social status. The cycle starts with the first feeding ceremony (New. *jā nakegu)* which takes place at the age of six months for babies of both sexes. The child receives an undershirt. In addition, boys are given a Nepali cap, *tapuli* (New.). After having completed this ceremony, the dead body of children will be cremated (like any adult) in the event of death and not buried as would have been the case had the child not undergone it. Then, at the age of five, the boy undergoes the *busākhā* ceremony, during which, as we saw earlier, the hair of the child is shaved for the first time. The father's sister collects the hair in a brass plate and throws it into the nearby river. The maternal uncle is expected to offer some clothes to his nephews at this ceremony.

Normally, at the age of seven or twelve, according to the locality, the young girls perform the mock marriage ceremony to the *bel* tree fruit *(Aegle marmelos)*, which symbolises the god Śiva. Among the Balāmi of Kagatigaon and Baligaon, the ritual is never collective as is usually the case among the Newar, but purely individual. The girl is given new clothes (blouse, skirt, etc) and she worships Gaṇeśa with her mother. This offering is more often than not followed by another *pūjā* to Mahālakṣmī goddess, sometime also to Bandevī. This mock marriage is a significant event in the life of a girl. It marks her accession to full social status. Before this date, the young girl would only mourn for ten days if one of her near relatives were to die. After undergoing the *ihi* mock marriage, the period of mourning, i.e., of pollution, will be extended to 45 days. It should be noted that this ceremony is not preceded by ritual reclusion, whether real or symbolic, at the time of the first menstrual period, as is generally done by Newars. The Balāmi allege that the period of twelve days during which

babies of both sexes are isolated with their mother from the rest of the family at the time of the birth, before being exposed to the sun, is its equivalent. In some villages, Phulcok for instance near Pharping, neither *ihi* nor seclusion when reaching menarche is performed.

The male initiation ceremony, *kaytā pūjā*, takes place at the age of twelve. The ceremony is carried out in front of the lineage deity *digudyaḥ*, in the presence of the boy's agnates, the family of his maternal uncle, and some affines. A cotton loincloth, *kaytā*, symbolising adulthood, is first of all presented to the lineage deity and then offered to the child. The ceremony occurs every year on the same date, on the occasion of Akṣaya Tritīyā, the third day of the bright half of the month of Baiśākh (April-May). After completing this observance, the young boy will have the obligation of lighting his father's funeral pyre, when the time comes. If a close agnate dies, the child will remain polluted (New. *dū cwanegu)* for a period ranging from ten days to one year according to his degree of proximity to the deceased person, instead of four days as was the rule before the *kaytā pūjā* initiation. It is the eldest male member of the descent group, the *thakāli*, who presents the *kaytā* loincloth to the initiated boy. In general, this person plays a crucial role in all domestic ceremonies. Traditionally, the Newar rite of consecration of old persons reaching the age of 77 years is not performed among the Balāmi.

Marriages are always arranged by the parents. Formerly this happened at an early age.[24] Today, they are rarely fixed before the age of eighteen. The horoscopes of the two young persons are examined beforehand. On both sides, intermediaries called *lami* in Newar are used. These individuals, women in most cases, play a central role in the negotiations and the closing stages of the alliance. The wedding itself is not marked by outstanding ceremonies, with the exception of the lineage deity of the groom's family who is propitiated with due offerings. No priest is called upon from outside the group. The bride's parents offer her a set of kitchen and domestic implements, furniture, and sometimes clothes. This constitutes her dowry, *kwasaḥ*. It will be transferred to the in-laws' house, but normally the bride will retain rights over these personal belongings in the case of divorce. Since 1980, means of contraception have become quite widespread in these peripheral zones. After delivering a first child,

24 Kagatigaon village is known for the persisting custom of child-marriage, i.e., marriage between children 12 to 15 years old, within the community.

Balāmi women now regularly visit the local Family Planning Centre, Pariwār Niyojan Kendra, and take the appropriate measures. Nowadays, the most popular contraceptive is the *saṅginī* (Nep., meaning 'friend).

Like all other Newars, Balāmi have death associations, called *sanāḥ guthi*, whose main functions are related to funerals. *Guthiyār* members express their condolences to the bereaved relatives and help cremate the dead. In addition, they have regular meetings throughout the year. Some consist of large feasts, with a series of meat dishes and alcohol. Every male *guthiyār* is compelled to participate in these ceremonial meals, otherwise he has to pay a fine. The three *sanāḥ guthi* of the Hundu Balāmi village, near Pharping, hold their feast on the full-moon day of the month of Mārga (November-December), Yaḥmari Punhī in Newar. On each occasion, a goat is sacrificed and the meat is shared among all male members. The expenditures are covered by contributions in cash or in grain by members of the association. Some time after the first meeting of the year, usually on the day of Śrī Pañcamī, the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Māgh (January-February), the affiliated families collect wood and store it in a shed, *gūsīpau*, located near their village. Those who cannot fulfil this requirement are expected to pay a fine in cash. Affiliation to the funeral association tends to be hereditary, from father to son. It is important to stress that the importance of these funeral groupings is not the same in all villages.[25] In Kagatigaon, for instance, they are involved in the overall social life to a lesser degree than elsewhere. But in every locality, all Balāmi residents are required to participate in the funerary procession, *sanāḥ wanigu*, from the house of the dead person to the cremation pyre, located at the nearest river.[26] Such ritual enactment contributes to creating a strong sense of identity among the members of the same settlement. The sociological unity of the village is thus clearly underlined.

Funerals are a key moment for another important reason. It is the only life-cycle ritual which requires the presence of non-Balāmi priests or ritual specialists. On the seventh day after cremation, a Kusle, tailor and religious musician by profession, is called upon first. The married daughters of the bereaved house present a member of this impure caste with the clothes of the deceased. They also offer cooked rice and pulses to

25 In some localities, for instance in the village of Phulcok, the Balāmi have a multi-functional *guthi* association which not only organises the main festivals of the community, but also funerals (see Chapter 9).

26 The same custom is followed in the Jyāpu village of Pyangaon.

this person.[27] Then, on the tenth day after the funeral, a Buddhist Vajrācārya priest is summoned to conduct the rituals for pacifying the spirit of the dead person and purifying the house, *ghaḥsū*. After this ceremony, the mourners can again eat meat and salt as before. Forty-five days after the funeral, another priest, a Newar Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ this time, is called upon to carry out a *śrāddha* ceremony which involves the offering of *piṇḍa* flour balls to the deceased. A similar *śrāddha* rite takes place a year after the cremation. This custom to invite both a Buddhist priest and a Hindu Brāhmaṇ to funerals, the first to deal with the dangerous spirit of the dead just after his demise, the other to offer food shortly afterwards to a pacified ancestor, is characteristic of the Balāmi. It is hence particularly difficult to label this group either Hindu or Buddhist. Such syncretic elements connected to the priestly function are nevertheless not exceptional in a Newar context. Some Śreṣṭha families do the same. So do the Putuwār, who are definitely very close to the Balāmi in a number of respects.

Pantheon and religious life

The polytheist pantheon of divinities does not present major differences with that of the Newar Hindu and Parbatiyā castes. In villages, temples are dedicated to Bhairava (Svacchanda Bhairava), Gaṇeśa, Kṛṣṇa, Śeṣ Nārāyaṇ, Mana Kāmanā, Sasudyaḥ (Sarasvatī), Gorakhnāth, various forms of blood-drinking Devī, such as Mahālakṣmī, Kumārī, and Indrāyaṇī as well as Ākāś Devī (Bijeśvarī), who is propitiated in the case of children's diseases. Taleju is also known. Two deities, however, are very specific to the Balāmi: Mahāconī and Sikāri.

The former, also called Cun Devī (or Cundyaḥ), is, in principle, a deity related to livestock and the protection of domestic animals. She is quite familiar in the south of the Kathmandu Valley. An important sanctuary located in Chunikhel, along the Bagmati river, not far from the village of Bungamati, is frequently visited by the Newar and the Parbatiyā castes of the region. But small altars to this deity are also found in Balāmi areas, outside the villages themselves, on the borders of fields or near grazing lands. This goddess drinks blood. She is offered goats and chickens on Tuesdays or Saturdays. Some view her as a boar-hunting deity. The offerings, *pūjā*, are organised especially from November until April.

27 The Kusle tailors are increasingly reluctant to complete this derogatory function during funerals.

Moreover, Cundyaḥ is linked to important Balāmi *guthi* associations and she appears in some masked dances every twelve years. Some informants feature her as a masculine deity.

Cundyaḥ is often paired with another goddess well known in the middle hills of Nepal, Sikāri or Ban Devī. She lives in the forest and is related to hunting. This deity is worshipped during the full moon of the month of Mārga (November-December), Yaḥmari Punhī or Thīlā Punhī, a day chosen by most Newar death associations to organise their foremost annual feast. At that time, animals are sacrificed jointly to Cun Devī and Sikāri. Interestingly, seven men, called 'the hunters', form a sub-group within the main *guthi* of Phulcok village.[28] These persons consider Sikāri their main deity. During the ceremonies, they carry a bow, arrows and a spear. They also attach bells to their ankles.

However, the main deity of the Balāmi is Mahālakṣmī. This goddess plays a central role among all members of the group. She is particularly significant in Kagatigaon, Chitlang, Pharping and in Baligaon. Her cult has remarkable common elements, which highlight the unity of the Balāmi group despite its relative geographical dispersion. Among these elements, let us mention: the existence of masked dances during which Mahālakṣmī, sometimes simply called Devī, is incarnated by a dancer in the midst of other divine beings, at the full moon of Kārtik (October-November); the central role of the religious association attached to the goddess Mahālakṣmī in the social organisation; and finally the opposition between two forms of the goddess, a pacified one living in the village and an unappeased one living in a forest nearby.

Let us take Kagatigaon as an example. The goddess's shrine, common to all the villages, is located on the first floor of a house and is very modest. Mahālakṣmī is represented here by a statue. The worship, entirely in Balāmi hands, is organised by a religious association, called *devī guthi*, gathering all the Balāmi of the village. Each household is represented by its eldest male member. The association includes about four hundred persons, called *guthiyār*, all male, as is the rule amongst the Newar. The ritual cycle runs all year round, except for a four-month period overlapping the rainy season. It starts with the new moon of Bhādra (August-September), *Gokarṇa aūsī*, the day of the year traditionally dedicated to the worship of dead fathers, and ends with the full moon of the

28 See also the next chapter on the Pahari basket-makers for parallels regarding the goddess Sikāri.

month of Baiśākh (April-may), *Mātā tīrtha aũsī*, the day reserved for the worship of dead mothers.

The worship includes daily offerings, *nitya pūjā*, as well as sacred dances, *dyaḥ pyākhā*, during which seven members, *guthiyār*, incarnate supernatural beings. These consist of four deities: Devī (=Mahālakṣmī), Kumārī, Bhairavī, Didi Desi, two facetious spirits *khyāḥ*, and a Nāga. The masks worn by the four gods are made and regularly repainted by Citrakārs painters from Asan ṭol, in Kathmandu. They are kept separately in the houses of the dancers. The choreographical performances take place on five precise dates of the religious calendar: Kārtik Punhī, the full moon of the month of Kārtik (October-November), the full moon of Mārga (November-December), Māgh Saṅkrānti, the day of the winter solstice, the full moon of Caitra (March-April), and also on Mātā Tīrtha, as already mentioned, the day which concludes the ritual cycle. The dancers wear long white skirts called *jāmā* and *ghāgalā* bells attached to their ankles and around their waist. They flourish swords and are thought to be possessed by the divinities they incarnate.[29] The dances are learned and rehearsed every year, a few days before the full moon of the month of Kārtik, i.e., before the troupe of dancers' first appearance (New. *dyaḥ pikaygu)*, under the direction of a music and dance master.

The statue of Mahālakṣmī is taken out of her temple on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtik and carried in procession to a sanctuary called *pīṭh* (New. *pīgā)* located outside Kagatigaon. This altar, which contains uncarved stones symbolising a whole set of deities, is devoted to the wild form of the goddess, Ban Devī Mahālakṣmī. The statue of Mahālakṣmī spends one night there and is taken back to the village the next day. Eight persons carry her on a palanquin *(khat jātrā)* along the main roads of the village. Two poles, called *liṅga*, with red flags attached to the top, head the procession. The villagers offer a number of goats, chickens and even buffaloes to the goddess. The *jātrā* is accompanied, as we saw earlier, with masked dances and followed by ceremonial meals. It is the main festival, *deś jātrā*, in the locality. Residents from surrounding villages come to Kagatigaon on that day to worship the deity.

Mahālaksmī holds a central place in the social organisation of all the Balāmi villages concerned. The most striking example is Pharping, where

29 The person embodying the Mahālakṣmī goddess holds a *khukuri* sword in one hand, a *pātra* Tantric bowl in the other.

I conducted research in 1976. In this market town located southwest of the Kathmandu Valley, the Mahālakṣmī guṭhī (or Sundarī Mahālakṣmī guṭhī), as in Kagatigaon, gathers all the local Balāmi as well as some other members of this quasi-ethnic group from the neighbourhood. Seven of them have the title *kawāta* (probably from *kawāḥ*: lineage) and preside over rituals. Significantly, these seven *kawāta* come from the seven lineages that make up the local Balāmi community: Takhechemi, Ywachemi, Wothumi, Tagwaḥmi, Itapi, Swāgumi and Silāmi. They are in charge of the fourteen annual feasts of the *guṭhī* association. They also sing and play music during the sacred dances performed every year at the time of the full moon of Kārtik (October-November). The dances last for five days and are performed in the two territorial moieties of the locality, the upper and the lower parts. The dancers drink the blood of the animals that are sacrificed for them. In theory, seven masked divinities, namely, Gaṇeśa, Mahālakṣmī, Kālī (Dakhinkālī), Kumārī, Indrāyaṇī, Nīl Vārāhī and Bhairava, dance on this occasion.[30] They also come from the seven lineages mentioned above. The final line-up is drawn up by the master of dance, *pyākhā guru*, who incarnates the goddess Mahālakṣmī and who must always be a member of the Takhachemi lineage.[31] This descent group indeed has clear precedence over the six others, especially on religious matters. The function of the master of dance is theoretically hereditary and is transmitted through the paternal line.

Once every twelve years, other divine beings, such as Cundyaḥ, Nāsaḥdyaḥ and Bāra Kanyā, take part in the dances. More often than not, the dancers are children wearing no masks but with their faces painted. This twelve-year festival, called *bār barsa* (or *jhīnidā) pyākhā*, is also based on a division of liturgical functions among the seven basic kinship units. These choreographic performances are managed by the same Sundarī Mahālakṣmī guṭhī. To sum up, in Pharping, the sacred dances *dyaḥ pyākhā* are totally organised along kinship ties. They are deeply

30 These seven deities correspond to the seven stones of the *pīṭh* sanctuary of Mahālakṣmī situated outside Pharping, towards the west. These uncarved stones, placed side by side in a line, face east and are guarded at their extremities by two stone lions. Three other gods are represented during the dances: Gaṅgā, Pārvatī and Mahādyaḥ, but the persons (mostly children) who embody them do not wear a mask. They just have their faces painted. It is worthwhile mentioning that the dance troupe also includes two *khyāḥ* and one skeleton called *kawā*. The village temple of Mahālakṣmī (local dialect: *thakā chē* or *dyaḥ chē)* is located in Kotsu ṭol, Pharping.

31 In 2003-05, the dance master of the Mahālakṣmī troupe came from the nearby village of Phulcok.

anchored in society. The members of the small town are bound together by pervasive rituals and dance ceremonies involving a great deal of music. For them, social ties depend heavily on the symbolic sphere.[32]

Various spiritual instructors preside over these groups of dancers. The Mahālakṣmī association has three teachers, one for music, especially drum music, *khīṃ guru*, the second for singing, *me hāle guru*, and the third for dance, *pyākhā guru*. The last one, which is the most important *(mūl guru)* of the three, possesses five different magical spells, *mantra*: one to ward off evil spirits from the dance site *(dabūli baray yāygu)*; the four others to make the dancers cry *(kholu khwekegu)*, to dry their tears, to instigate as well as stop a trance *(khāykegu)*. These musical and religious functions are generally transmitted from father to son. The sacred dances are interrupted by comic episodes of a more secular form, called *khyāk pyākhā*.

To accompany these choreographic performances, the Balāmi use most of the usual Newar musical instruments: *bhusyāḥ* and *jhyāli* cymbals, *bāṃsuri* and *bay* flutes, *khīṃ* and *daba (dāphā)* drums, *pwāgā* trumpets. Yet, they do not use the large *dhimay* drums characteristics of the Jyāpu agriculturists. Music is taught either in the house of a particular man, often called *kaji*, who is devoted to music, or in a special house called *pyākhā chē*. Teaching goes along with numerous offerings to Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the Newar god of music and dance. Each Balāmi village or hamlet has a temple, often situated outside the settlement itself, dedicated to this deity. Nāsaḥdyaḥ is especially fond of eggs and the blood of ducks. Men are forbidden to have sexual intercourse during the whole period of apprenticeship. Dances are also accompanied by songs (fourteen singers who play cymbals themselves) as per a frequent Newar practice (Toffin 1995).

Most of the important festivals incorporated in the Nepali and Newar calendar are celebrated, with the exception of the Indra Jātrā and Newar Buddhist ceremonies. On the ninth day of the Dasaī festival observed in honour of the goddess Durgā, the Balāmi of the Pharping region carry

32 The Mahālakṣmī goddess is often involved in the splitting processes among kin groups which occur regularly within local communities. According to a tradition recorded in Chitlang in 1976, the Balāmi there formerly had close relationships with their cousins from Pharping. The two Balāmi groups were *dāju-bhāi*, 'elder and younger brothers'. They worshipped the same Mahālakṣmī goddess whose altar was situated half-way between the two localities, near a river. After a quarrel between the two villages, the Pharping Balāmi moved the goddess to their place. Those of Chitlang were obliged to establish another temple for the deity.

out a series of very specific rituals which are worth noting. In every house, two figures of deities are drawn with white clay on the inner wall of the first floor or under the rafters. One represents Bhimsen, the other (to the left) Tanga, a local name given to Sarasvatī, the goddess of education. The two divinities brandish weapons. Roosters are sacrificed to them. The next day, the whole family pays a visit to the husband's parents-in-law. The animals' heads are offered to the deities the day before and are taken along together with alcohol and rice. The in-laws bless the couple and their children, while applying a *ṭikā* mark on their forehead. Afterwards, they present each of them with a *pāthī* measure of flattened rice (New. *baji).* This significant visit, locally termed *baji ku yegu* or *ṭikā ku yegu*, expresses the persuasive links between wife-takers and wife-givers in Balāmi society. The religious drawings are often wiped off the wall only two weeks later, when the Tihār festival is completed. Interestingly, the Balāmi do not perform the *mha pūjā* ritual, offerings to one's body, typical of the Newar and normally carried out during Tihār.

The healer in charge of evil spirits is called *baide* (Nep. *baidya),* a word that in Newar designates both a medium and an apothecary using, among other practices, Ayurveda, astrological devices and Tantric methods. He is consulted in the event of individual disorder, possession, for instance, and supernaturally caused misfortune. The Balāmi *baide* feels the pulse of the suffering person. In this way, he identifies and diagnoses the cause of the trouble. To help with the patient's recovery, he later recommends some offerings to some particular mischievous spirits or angered deities. He may also mention witchcraft or a misalignment in the patient's planets as influencing the disease. In the event of a prolonged illness, the *baide* turns into an intercessor and officiates in the house of his client at night. He applies some Tantric mantra formula to the ill and dances while invoking his auxiliary spirits and tapping on a brass plate with a stick. It is said that formerly these ritual practitioners were dressed in long, white skirts, *jāmā*, like shamans, and wore a headdress decorated with silver petals, *kikampā* (or *kikimpā),* representing five different divinities. Today these elements have disappeared. The *baide* conducts the curing ritual without wearing any special costume; his head is just covered with a white turban. This healing tradition is nevertheless very much alive today. In 2005, five specialists of this kind resided in the village of Phulcok. They were especially renowned for their counter-measures against *tunā munā* spells involved in magically induced love affairs. These spells are used by a man to cast a magic

charm on a particular woman to make her fall in love with him. This exorcism is performed with fumigation and mantras. Interestingly, Tamang and Parbatiyā high castes often call upon Balāmi healers when necessary.

Conclusion

As stressed by Rauber (1980) and Levine (1988) in their writings on Tibetan populations of far-western and north-west Nepal, the specialisation of a given group in a specific economic occupation or in a special craft frequently induces a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of ethnicity. Although they belong to the ethnic category of Tibetan (Bhotiya), the Khyampa and Nymba communities from Humla District have, under certain circumstances, formed specific ethnic groups over relatively recent times. Being bound by a common activity or an economic position within a favourable ecological niche, clearly encourages the construction of boundaries. These factors are of crucial importance for generating the formation of a particular ethnic group. It is likely that wood-cutting constitutes an element in which the Balāmi sense of identity is rooted, in the same way as the nomadic trade operated in the case of the transhumant Khyampa herdsmen from the Humla region bartering Tibetan and Indian salt for rice with Nepali hill farmers.

In any case, the members of this peasant and wood-cutter group have for a long time now felt as being rather on the periphery of Newar society. They are integrated in the embracing Newar caste system in a less organic way than the Jyāpu farmers or the Gathu gardeners. However, they have a due role in the global ritual order by which the Newar caste system as a whole, in the past as well as in the present, is anchored in society. Most of the masked dances they have to carry out on certain religious events are funded by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān, a state organisation. They must be performed at regular intervals if the king wants to conciliate divine beings and natural forces. Without sacred dances and blood sacrifices to these living deities, there is an obvious risk of natural catastrophes and calamities in the kingdom. The Balāmi, therefore, occupy a coherent position in the magical-religious system aimed at protecting the Kathmandu Valley from external threats.

As already stressed above, these dances include fierce deities and require animal sacrifices to pacify a variety of wild gods and goddesses. They also enact war episodes between gods and demons derived from the *Purāṇas*. It is not by mere chance that the ritual sphere in which the

Balāmi are specialised in relation to the populations of the centre of Kathmandu Valley is focused on sacred dances. Most of the Newar clearly associate the members of this marginal group with the dangerous and perilous world of the forest from which they once derived a great part of their livelihood. The opposition between the core and the periphery plays its part here at a symbolic level. In this sense, the Balāmi act as mediators between the civilised world of villages and towns of the centre, and the untamed forces from the forest (Toffin 2005).

We will probably never know if the Balāmi were originally a separate ethnic group which subsequently merged with the Newar caste system, or if their ancestors were driven back towards the edges of the Kathmandu Valley by consecutive invaders. Whatever the case may be, the members of the group occupy, in the past as in the present, an intermediary position between the Kathmandu Valley and the surrounding hills. Their agriculture, their habitat, as well as other aspects of their material culture and lifestyle, show conspicuous similarities with those of the Tamang and the Parbatiyā living in the surrounding areas. But their social and religious life belongs undoubtedly to the Newar world. Over-simplifying forms of determinism, which aspire to institute a mechanical link between milieu and culture, are refuted here. Even when transplanted in a slope and forest environment, the Balāmi continue to be governed by Newar caste rules, kinship and *guthi* association, all of which are the bases of this society.

More striking for the researcher is the tangible absence of development during the last 30 years in areas inhabited by the Balāmi. During the same period, the urban centres of the Valley have undergone tremendous transformations. They have been increasingly exposed to new educational and western medicine facilities, improved communications and other forms of development. A large part of the indigenous population has benefited from these changes. However, Balāmi villages located on the periphery remain very backward. There is a considerable gap between the adjustment of local economic needs and the increased population density as well as other ecological factors. Access to a village like Kagatigaon is still extremely difficult during the monsoon: one has to walk on a steep-sloped path broken up regularly by landslides and gullied by rain. In the village, the Balāmi female population has so far benefitted very little from schooling. Among males, only three young boys have so far passed the SLC examination. Parents aspire to more and better education for their children, but economic pressures oblige most children to

abandon their studies. Equally striking is the scarcity of paid jobs (the Balāmi invariably take up menial jobs such as 'peon', house servants, etc). One has the feeling that these regions have remained excluded from development and that their inhabitants are cut off from all influential networks. The progressive abandonment of cutting and selling wood, an activity which has never been adequately replaced, has clearly worsened an already difficult situation. More generally, the increase in disparities between the Kathmandu Valley and its surroundings (one might say, with the rest of the country) is unquestionably a crucial problem which Nepal faces today.

In 1996, a group of young Balāmi created an association, called *Balāmi Samūha*, aiming at mitigating 'backwardness' and improving the social situation of the members of the community. This association, which is presently headed by a villager from Phulcok, also intends to protect the Balāmi culture, even if its leaders sometime propose to reduce the cost and the length of the customary ceremonies. This programme goes hand with hand with the democratic movement of the 1990s and its promotion of citizens' right. Obviously, the *Balāmi Samūha* contributes to strengthening the identity of the group, perhaps to the detriment of traditional links between Balāmis and Newars. Their leaders clearly sympathise with the *janajāti* movement, which unites most of the ethnic groups of Nepal, claiming more power and better recognition within the country (Chapter 12). The use of this term, *janajāti*, which has recently been introduced in the political vocabulary of the country, is nonetheless unknown in the region concerned.

8

A Peripheral Group on the Rim of the Kathmandu Valley: The Pahari

Recent anthropological research on Nepal challenges an increasing number of ideas and notions inherited from the 19th century. For example, it is acknowledged today that the classification of the Tibeto-Burman-speaking populations of the hill and mountainous districts of the country into separate ethnic groups such as the Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Rai, and Thakali corresponds far from perfectly to the facts observed in the field and can only be accepted as a hypothesis for verification. None of these so-called hill tribes actually constitutes a homogenous ethnic group, either culturally or linguistically. The Rai of Eastern Nepal—who are segmented into a dozen sub-groups, each with its own identity, its own language (or dialect), more often than not mutually unintelligible, and sometimes its own mythology—are probably the clearest and most exemplary case of internal differentiation, but definitely not the only one. These populations, which, for the most part, are organised according to social rules different from those of the Hindu world of castes, are also known to easily change their ethnonyms, either to uplift their status or to

---

First published as 'L'organisation sociale des Pahari (ou Pahi), population du Centre Népal', in *L'Homme*, 1981, XXI:2, pp. 39-68. The author translated the article for this book with some additions and corrections. Most notably, I have added a few pages on the lifestyle and resources of the Pahari. I have not had the opportunity to return to the Pahari villages in question since my fieldwork in the 1970s.

take advantage of particular privileges. A number of Tibetans have thus become Sherpas over the last few decades and in the 1970s I came across some Tamangs in Central Nepal who had started to claim to be Gurung. Finally, one has to distinguish between an ethnonym used in self-ascription and one ascribed by others. Little attention has been paid thus far to local naming practices.

The relevance of classifications with regard to ethnic names must thus be considered with caution. These ethnonyms actually result from various historical processes of construction over long periods of time. They sometimes cloud unexpected links between groups and shared transethnic cultural features. In an old article, N.J. Allen (1978: 11) stresses that Thakalis used to label themselves Tamang or Thamang, a word phonetically close to Tamu-mai, by which Gurungs identify themselves. Could it not be that these three populations were a single 'group' in ancient times? In addition, social anthropologists have recently underlined that the limits of the lands on which these populations lived were often more ambiguous than has been previously reported. In some circumstances, micro-ethnic groups appear in peripheral zones, borrowing various cultural elements from the neighbouring populations. This seems to have been the case with the Ghale population living in the northern parts of Gorkha District, around Barpak, between the Tamang and Gurung regions (Messerschmidt 1976: 32). Likewise, it would be interesting to have further ethnographic material on the Dura of Lamjung District and the Chantels of the area south of Dhaulagiri, two little-known ethnic groups of western Nepal. Perhaps a similar process occurred between Magrant (the land of the Magars) and the Gurung homeland. Whatever the case may be, these findings compel us to reconsider our old models and representations. They encourage researchers to pay closer attention to these minority populations, unwisely identified with the adjacent encompassing ethnic groups. The ethnography of such marginalised groups, in fact, raises a number of interesting issues with regard to the production of ethnic identities. It also leads us to more general reflections on the various processes of acculturation encountered in the Nepal hills.

Like other Nepali populations speaking a Tibeto-Burman language, the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley and the surrounding areas do not constitute a uniform community. In particular, a number of small groups living on the edges of the Valley and closely related to the Newar, present some obvious peculiarities and sometimes retain a distinct ethnic identity. These groups keep to themselves and do not intermarry. Their lead-

ers, influenced by the post-1990 *janajāti* ('nationalities') movement (Chapter 12), currently tend to emphasise their differences from Newar culture in an exaggerated manner. Anthropologists, on the other hand, are at odds on the subject, since they are in great need of reliable data and other accounts on these populations. It is precisely the aim of this chapter to provide more information on this subject, through a case study restricted to one group.

Out of these minority populations, the Pahari are those who have developed a sense of ethnic identity to the utmost degree and preserved the greatest number of specific cultural features. Their language, Pahari, was dealt with in a separate chapter in the *Linguistic Survey of India* published at the beginning of the 20th century (Grierson, 1909, III, part I: 227-232), even if, ultimately, the author classified it as a dialect of Newar, within the category of the 'non-pronominalised' Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayan groups. Robert Shafer (1967) also links Pahari to the Newar language, but he registers both of them within an intermediary group, between the 'Burmic' and the 'Bodic' (Tibetan) division. Not being a linguist myself, I cannot add anything new to this discussion. I only stress that these two languages are not fully comprehensible to speakers of each. Admittedly, the Pahari understand the Newar language fairly well—it is, to this day, very much in use for trade in all the bazaars in the region. Yet the Newar understand very little spoken Pahari. Today, Paharis express themselves more fluently in Nepali, which they speak as a second language, than they do in Newar.

I published an article in 1977 on the rural economy of the Pahari and another one, in 1997, on the winter ceremonies of their death associations. The present chapter concentrates on the social structure of this population. I intend to give a detailed description here of kin groups, kinship terminology, marriage and *guthi* associations, and to demonstrate the contrasts and similarities between the Pahari and the Newar. I have included a section on the resources of this group to document some similarities with the Balāmi and the Swãgumi of Pyangaon. All things considered, this account is only a preliminary contribution. I spent a little more than three months studying this population, and I have not been able to learn the Pahari language.[1] My research was mainly conducted in Nepali and sometimes in Newar. I nevertheless do hope that

1 The data presented in this chapter have been collected over three periods of fieldwork: the first in April and July 1974, the second in September and October 1975, and the third in

this introductory study will contribute to the knowledge of this particular population and to the more general study of the small ethnic groups of the Himalaya, which Brian Houghton Hodgson, the famous British Orientalist of the 19th century, called 'the broken tribes' of Nepal, an expression to which we will return shortly.

Who are the Pahari?

The Tibeto-Burman-speaking Pahari group must be clearly distinguished from the Pahārīs, 'the people from the mountains (or from the hills)', originally a geographical term, which currently tends to designate the people of the middle hills. The names that members of this group ascribe to themselves are usually Pahi or Pihi. In 1975, I estimated their numbers to be about 3,400.[2] According to the 2001 Census, which recognises them as a separate ethnic group, their population totals 11,505. They live in central Nepal, in the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley, especially towards the south. Their villages are located between an altitude of 1,400 and 1,750 m, along a strip starting from Basan in the Hatti Ban Village Development Committee, in the south-western part of the Kathmandu Valley, and ends in Khopasi, in the Khopasi Village Development Committee, near Panauti, to the south-east.[3] Some of them, like Itadi, Basan and Kotkhu, are situated within the Kathmandu Valley. Others, like Sikharpa, Pare and Pahigaon (near Khopasi), are located in adjoining valleys. The southern boundary of the Pahari settlement area can be fixed by a tributary of the Bagmati, the Thosne Khola (27°30' north, 85°20' east), flowing west to east at a distance of two days' walk from the capital.

Thus defined, the homeland of the Pahari is bordered by two distinct geographical formations. To the north: the Kathmandu basin (1,350 m in altitude), the centre of Newar civilisation, with its rich rice fields and large urban settlements. To the south: the bulky Mahabharat Range, cul-

February 1976. My research was conducted more particularly in the villages of Kotkhu in the Taukhel village panchayat (since 1990, village development committee), near Godavari; and in Sikharpa, locally known as Sipa, in the Lele village panchayat. In addition, I visited other Pahari localities during a general survey of Newar castes which I carried out in 1976-77. I would like to thank Vishnu Bahadur Shrestha and Krishna Prasad Rimal for their help during my research, as well as my two main Pahari informants: Bhim Bahadur Pahari (Kotkhu) and Gundabir Pahari (Sikharpa).

2 The 1961 Census gives a figure of 3,002 persons speaking Pahari as their mother tongue.

3 According to the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN), Paharis also live further east, in Palanchok (Kabrepalanchok District) (www.nefen.org).

minating at 3,700 m in altitude, covered with forests and inhabited on its lower slopes by sparse communities of Tamangs, Danuwars and Nepali-speaking Bāhun-Chetrīs.

The Pahari have for a long time taken advantage of this intermediary position. Traditionally, they are principally basket-makers and wood-cutters, and it was from these two activities that they made their living. In 1854, Hodgson described them in the following words: 'They make baskets and brooms. They go to the forest to cut bamboo and reeds' (Chattopadhyay 1923: 543). At the time of my fieldwork, this description was still more or less valid. In the 1970s, the Pahari derived an

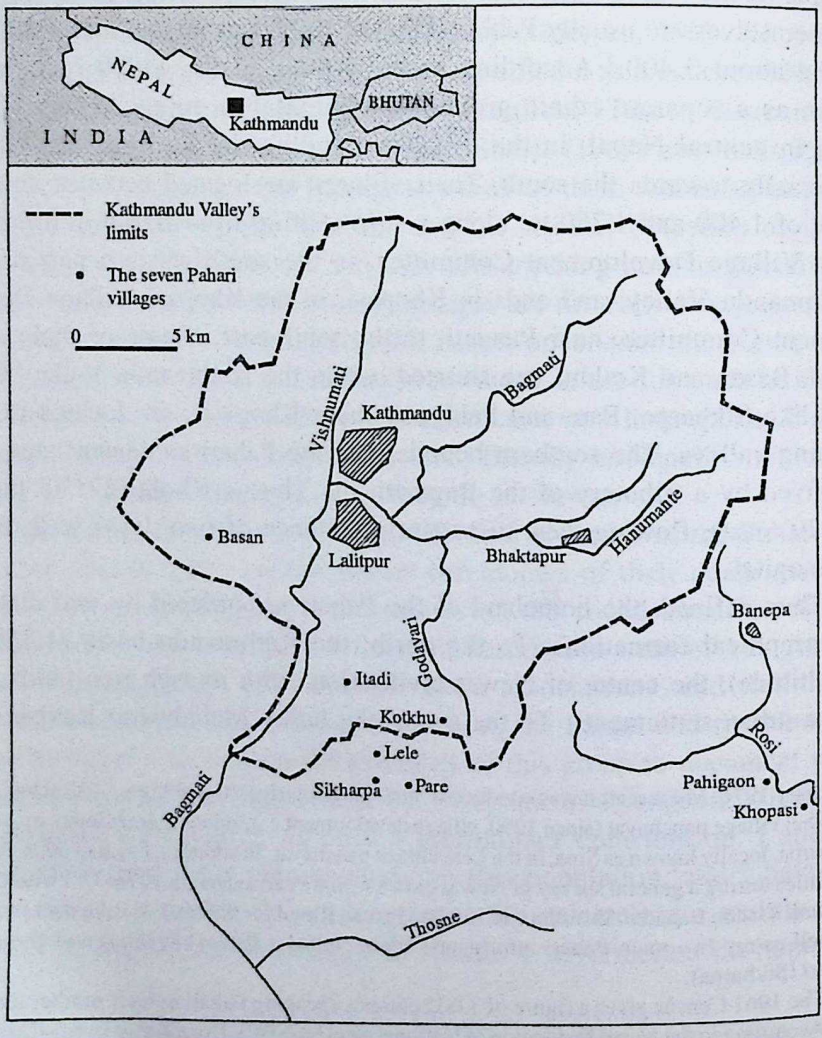


Fig. 9. **Distribution of main Pahari villages in the Kathmandu Valley**

important part of their resources from products from the forest. They still bartered in wood[4] and bamboo basketry against grain in the Kathmandu Valley. However, as will be shown below, agriculture has become increasingly important for them over the years. During the time of my fieldwork, the Pahari might have been portrayed as small land-owning farmers tilling their fields themselves. Forestry was increasingly becoming a subsidiary activity, principally serving to supplement grain production.

According to a widely told story, the Pahari are failed Brāhmaṇs. They were chased from the Kathmandu Valley by a king of the royal city of Bhaktapur after committing a fault while fulfilling their customary duties. As the story goes:

> One of our ancestors, the one we all descend from, was a cook, Brāhmaṇ by caste, who worked for the Newar king of Bhaktapur. He used to prepare such delicious dishes that the king, amazed at such magnificent talents, decided one day to spy on his servant at work. Hiding in an adjacent room and watching the kitchen through a small hole, he was filled with horror at the sight of the cook dipping his finger into the pan to taste the food for salt. By doing this, the Brāhmaṇ was polluting the royal food. Shocked and upset, the sovereign dismissed the man from his service and chased him from the palace. He called him *phohari* (Nep. 'dirty'). This shameful expression became so deeply associated with the cook's family that it was passed on to his descendants. Over the years, it transformed into the term 'Pahari'.
>
> The erstwhile cook subsequently left Bhaktapur and settled with his wife in a nearby forest called Pokhari Bās. They built a hut and lived there a number of years, gathering food from the forest and begging alms from travellers who happened by. They bore a son, and the child became a handsome young man. One day, he went to the nearby city to beg for food. The princess of the royal palace there saw him and fell in love with him. She called him over and offered him a meal. The young man was equally seduced by the king's daughter. He asked her father for her hand in marriage. The king, who did not know anything about this boy, tested him with a few questions. 'How large is your house?' he first asked. 'My home is pleasant,' the man replied,

4 The name Sipa (Sikharpa), the village where I undertook most of my fieldwork, comes from *sī*, 'wood', and *pā*, the axe with which the wood is or was cut in the forest.

'Stars illuminating the sky can be seen at night.' The king pictured a palace with numerous terraces (instead of a hut with a roof in disrepair), and was delighted. His second question: 'How many heads of cattle does your father possess?' 'Half of it lives in the house, the rest outside,' the boy replied. The king was thrilled: this man must be incredibly rich. The number of cattle he has is so great that the animals cannot all be housed in the palace. He was far from imagining that the boy's house was so small that a single cow could not fit in it. Third question: 'How many plates do you dispose of in your kitchen?' 'I don't need to count or wash them,' came the answer. Once again, the king was taken in. He thought of a person so rich that his plates were thrown away after being used just once. In fact, the boy had meant that he was so poor that he took his meals on leaf plates, which are usually thrown away after the meal.

The king was favourably impressed by the answers and gave his daughter in marriage to the beggar. The wedding was celebrated at the palace and the couple afterwards left the city. When they reached the hut in the forest, the young princess realised the misunderstanding. She endured a life much more laborious and strenuous that she could have expected. One night, a fire destroyed the hut. The young couple managed to escape in time, but the parents died in the flames. The princess and her husband left this place forever and settled elsewhere. They soon fell very ill. A healer *(baide)* told them: 'The souls of your parents are tormenting you. Perform a funeral ceremony for their benefit, and then you will be liberated from your misfortune.' After the husband and wife performed the recommended ritual, they recovered rapidly. They had seven sons. Each of them established a different village; the first one founded Kodkhu, the second, Pare, the third, Sikharpa, the fourth, Khopasi (Pahigaon), the fifth, Lele, the sixth, Itadi, and the seventh, Basan. These seven localities are, to this day, the main Pahari settlements.

This legend establishes a link, admittedly tenuous, between the Pahari and the Newar. Are the Pahari a distinct ethnic group or a caste included within the encompassing Newar society? In two articles, dated 1849 and 1857 respectively, Hodgson held the first interpretation. He found a connection between the Pahari and several other small ethnic groups such as the Chepang, Kusunda, Danuwar, Thami, Kuswar (or Majhi), Dhimal, Kumhal and Hayu. In the mid-19th century, these populations were still

making their livelihoods principally from hunting, fishing and gathering wild plants and other products. Some of them apparently lived a semi-nomadic life, practising slash-and-burn agriculture. Hodgson classified all these small groups as the 'broken tribes' of Nepal. He viewed them as the ancient demographic substratum of the Central Himalaya, older than the larger and better-known ethnic groups of the Nepal hills such as the Newar, Gurung and Magar. In one of his articles (1857: 61), he suggested that these 'broken tribes' belong to some Indo-Germanic 'fragmentous branches', which he also identified as Turanian. He linked these groups to various Indian tribes, especially those speaking the Munda languages.

All the national censuses of Nepal have consistently recognised the distinctiveness of the Pahari and recorded separate figures for this group. This distinction is also found in the 1854 Muluki Ain, which contributed for more than one century to the classification of the different Nepali populations, and dictated their relationships according to a dominant Brahmanical point of view. The Code grouped the Pahari with some of the 'broken tribes' referred to by Hodgson and assigned them a rank slightly lower than purely Newar castes. As previously stated (Chapter 7), it is worth pointing out that another legal document placed both the Balāmi and the Pahari in the category of 'Enslavable Alcohol-Drinker' ethnic groups (Höfer 1979: 142).

In other unpublished documents, Hodgson, however, considered the Pahari a Newar caste or a Jyāpu farming sub-caste. Somewhere, he even regards them as the original Jyāpu (cf. Chattopadhyay 1980: 99). This view was later adopted by Sylvain Lévi (1905: 172) and Gopal Singh Nepali (1965: 168).

This interpretation obviously underestimates the significant differences, linguistic and cultural, that exist between the two groups. It is clear that the ancestors of today's Pahari had been part of the surrounding Newar culture for a very long time. As will be shown below, their social organisation relies on the same basic elements as does that of the Newar. But the two groups cannot be equated with each other. The Pahari exhibit cultural features—such as the *phuli* nose ornament that all women wear, and the thatched-roof houses resembling Tamang and Parbatiyā dwellings, with the fireplace and the kitchen situated on the ground floor, a separate pen for cattle, and a large, open courtyard out front—which stand in striking contrast to the Newar. These features bring them closer to the other surrounding populations, especially the Tamang and the

Nepali-speaking Parbatiyā castes. The Pahari also have a strong sense of ethnic specificity, a feeling reinforced by identifiable customs and traditions. They do not actually consider themselves Newars, whom they call *Nijāta*. They see these persons, peasants as well as city-dwellers, as people 'from the Kathmandu Valley', *nepāḥpīṃ*, whereas they view themselves as *pahāṛpīṃ*, 'hill people'. Similarly, the Newar regard the Pahari as a distinct group, having a close relationship with the forest, and, at all events, too different from them to be called Newar.

Paharis sometimes also used to call themselves Nagarkoṭi. As we know, this word is used primarily to designate descendants of mixed unions between Newar women and Tamang (or Gurung or Magar) men.[5] During the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, the Nagarkoṭi were, in theory, the only Newars entitled to enlist in the Gorkha battalions. Interestingly, the Pahari villagers of Kotkhu say that the real Nagarkoṭi are the people belonging to the Khusaḥ (Taṇḍukār) Newar caste—weavers, stucco-decorators, flattened-rice threshers and grain parchers by profession—who are scattered all over the Kathmandu Valley, but mainly in rural clusters on the periphery.

Rural economy and livelihood

Nowadays, the Pahari make their living mainly from agriculture. Their land consists of non-irrigated (Pah. *kemi)* and irrigated fields (Pah. *bū).* The former make up 72 per cent of the total cultivated territory in the village of Sikharpa and 65 per cent in the village of Kodkhu. Rain crops include maize (Pah. *lāḥjā), Eleusine coracana* millet (Pah. *dusi),* buckwheat, mustard (Pah. *tū),* and soybeans (Pah. *madi),* which are some of the Pahari's favourite foods. In the irrigated fields, which are located in valleys and on terraced slopes, two crops, of wheat and of rice (Pah. *yā),* alternate over the course of the year, as is common practice in the whole area. Slash-and-burn cultivation is only practised in the most distant fields, located on the edge of forests. In these peripheral zones, crops are sown again in the same field after burning off vegetative cover following a fallow period of five to six years. As among the Balāmi, there is general use of the oxen-drawn plough (Pah. *suro).* The digging tool *kodālo* is used only for hoeing and digging.

Most of the Pahari farmers own some fields, which they cultivate themselves. A number of them (25 per cent in Sikharpa) also work as tenants

5 See also, in this book, Chapter 7.

on fields owned by Bāhun-Chetrīs and Newars from the surrounding localities. The surface area of fields is mainly calculated in *ropani* (1 *ropani*=1/20 hectare) for irrigated fields, and in volumetric grain measures *(muri)* for the other fields. Altogether, 20 per cent of the family estates harvest 25 *muri* of grain a year, 44 per cent produce between 25 and 35 *muri*, and 34 per cent, i.e., a third of the total holdings, harvest 35 *muri* a year (Sikharpa village, 1975). These figures are quite low compared to the total cereal production per holding within the Kathmandu Valley, where 55 *muri* a year for one family is not uncommon. In Sikharpa, of the 45 Pahari households in the community, 35 could not cover their annual grain needs with the produce of their fields. At the time of my study, no chemical fertilisers were in use.

In most of the Pahari villages in Lele Village Development Committee, fruit trees are of crucial economic importance. These peasants have been growing fruits in their gardens (Pah. *kemicā)* for a long time. The most common are peach trees, pear trees, lemon trees and tamarind trees. At the time of my fieldwork, one *ḍoko* load of lemons was sold on the market for about 16 rupees (a *ḍoko* being a large bamboo basket carried on the back), and a load of pears (Pah. *pāsi,* Nep. *nāspāti)* for 7 rupees. Tamarinds (Pah. *golpau*, Nep. *amali* or *amalā)* and peaches (Pah. *besi*, Nep. *āru)* on the other hand were bartered in the surrounding localities. A *pāthī* of tamarinds was exchanged for one *pāthī* of paddy or 4 *mānā* of rice. When it came to peaches, the rate was less profitable: one fruit measure for half a measure of paddy. With two tamarind trees, in a year a family could obtain the equivalent of 20 days of their requirements in cereal. This fruit could also be bartered for potatoes, garlic or red pimento.

In the 1970s, the Pahari of the villages of Sikharpa and Kotkhu were still experts at processing bamboo (Pah. *purā)* and reeds (Pah. *tī).* They mostly manufactured winnowing trays, rain covers to enable them to work in the fields during the rainy season (New. *sināj yākusā*, Pah. *pahikusā*, Nep. *ghum),* bamboo mats used to make large grain containers or paddy stores (Pah. and New. *bhakāri),* and a large variety of baskets used for various purposes, such as transporting and stocking grain, carrying loads on the back, and storing potatoes outdoors under the eaves. Basket-making has always been a male activity. The main period of processing was winter. The work started with scraping the external surface, splitting the lengths of bamboo into several pieces, and then extracting and preparing the strips (Pah. *phurā).* After this, the bamboo

strips were woven according to specific designs. The main tool for these operations was a kind of machete called *cibi* (New. *cupi)*. To work raffia (Nep. *bet*, Pah. *pi)*, especially useful for binding and ligatures, the *khukuri*, the angled knife that is now one of Nepal's national symbols, was used. Baskets were sold or bartered in the Kathmandu Valley for cereals. A winnowing tray, for instance, was exchanged in 1975 for two *pāthī* of maize or 10 *mānā* of paddy. A four-legged grain basket was worth 10 *mānā* of maize.

Bamboo was cut in the forests that cover the southern slopes of the Mahabharat range and in the Inner Tarai. Like their Pyangaon cousins, Paharis used to go and fetch bamboo from these distant areas in male groups of 10 to 15 persons. They started these expeditions from the month of February, just after the mustard harvest, and continued until April, i.e., the period for sowing maize. They lived on the spot of the felling in temporary huts they built themselves or in caves. As among the Swãgumi, Bhimsen was worshipped regularly while on these trips. He was, in fact, the main deity associated with these forest activities. The youngest member of the troop prepared food for the others. I was told that this person represents Kṛṣṇa. These expeditions to the south have stopped since the 1960s because of restrictions imposed by forest protection policies. At present, bamboo is cut in bamboo plantations (Pah. *pura bū)* outside the village.

The Pahari also maintained their livelihoods by cutting wood from the forest south of their villages and selling or bartering it in the Kathmandu Valley. This activity was undertaken especially during the dry and cold season before the monsoon rains. The three main tools and pieces of equipment were the axe (Pah. *pā)*, the rope *nau* fixed against the forehead to support loads of wood carried on the back, and straw shoes, *nālu lākhāṃ*, which were apparently indispensable for walking on steep slopes covered by dense forests. The most sought-after tree was the oak. Felled trees were chopped on the spot and then carried to the village in loads (Nep. *bhāri)* of 40 to 45 kg. Women and children participated in these ferrying activities. Lichens were also brought back from the forest and sold in the market. In former times, they served to dye cotton thread used for clothing, particularly the black wraparound typical of the Jyāpu farmer women. This cutting and selling of wood was still very much in practice during the 1970s, especially in the village of Sikharpa. In 1975, a load of wood was sold for 10 rupees. The peak time for this trade was from January to February, when the Newar were in

great need of wood to cook food for their ceremonial meals, particularly those linked to *guthi* and life-cycle ceremonies.

Fishing is another important activity worth mentioning. At the time of my fieldwork, the Pahari fished in the rivers, streams and ponds found around their villages, especially from January to May. They used bamboo weirs and a large cast-net made from a special fibrous plant which they call *kisi nay*. Several pieces of iron are tied to the ends of this fishing net. It resembles the standard nylon net presently in use in the Kathmandu and Banepa valleys among the Poḍe Newar fishermen. The Pahari also fish with iron hooks (Pah. *bwalsi)* fixed to cotton threads, with worms or crab baits depending on the size of the fish. Besides, they practise a special way of fishing, by poisoning the flow of a river with the sap of the agave plant. This technique requires the cooperation of 10 to 15 persons, all males, both adults and children. In April 1974, I had the opportunity to participate in one of these collective fishing outings south of Sikharpa. The poisoned fish were directed towards the sand banks of the rivers through channels constructed for this purpose. Half a kilo of small fish was caught that day. The participants, all Paharis, were disappointed. They had expected two to three kilograms. Land crabs, which have a reputation for damaging rice plants, are collected in streams, pools, irrigation drains and rice fields. They provide a much-needed source of protein in these peasants' diet.

Hunting is on the wane. Children catch small birds with nets set in the holes left behind by scaffolds on the external walls of houses.[6] As in the Kathmandu Valley, these holes are not closed but left for birds to make their nests. Boys also use sling-shots with sun-dried balls of clay. Adults occasionally trap pheasants and jungle fowl (Pah. *tukhā* or *gūkhā)* in snares set in the forest. Nevertheless, the Pahari still have memory of a time when they regularly hunted panther, wild boar and deer with guns. They continue to venerate the hunting god Sikārdyaḥ (or Sikāri). This deity is symbolised by a set of nine aniconic stones placed on the ridges of local mountains, surrounded by forests. He is offered a chicken on the last Tuesday of the lunar month of Mārga (November-December). This forest god is believed to cause stomach pains and provoke diarrhoea. In the village of Kodkhu, Sikārdyaḥ is worshipped especially by a group of six Pahari elders who are members of a *sikār guthi* association. These persons meet with bows and arrows several times a year in the forest, but

6 The same technique is used by the Putuwār to catch birds.

the main event occurs during the Dasaĩ festivities, in autumn. On the tenth day, Vijayā Daśamī, which commemorates the victory of the goddess over the demon, the six elders participate in public in an archery competition. Bows (Pah. *nhindā)* and arrows (Pah. *burā)* are subsequently placed in the headman's house, on the head of the buffalo slaughtered two days before. A connection is thus established between Sikārdyaḥ, archery and the village headman.

Local power and territory

All Pahari villages are loosely-knit, and extremely different from the usual Newar settlement with its brick houses, packed tightly together along narrow streets. The houses are not joined and do not conform to any pattern along a central road. They are built at a distance from each other or are congregated in small, named hamlets (Nep. *ṭol*, Pah. *gõ* or *gwahā)* of four or five buildings, separated by stretches of non-irrigated fields. The villages are usually set up along a ridge, and only more rarely on the slope of a hill. There is no street per se, just paths wide enough for one person to walk along. These rapidly turn into streams when it rains during the rainy season.

Villages tend to expand as houses are built at their peripheries. The residents of these newly built hamlets usually practise slash-and-burn agriculture for some years and then set up permanent fields. The territorial boundaries of these settlement units are remarkably unfixed. This makes the integration of outsiders belonging to other castes or ethnic groups easier.

Traditionally, each Pahari village was run by a headman called *dwāḥre*. This person was in charge of collecting land taxes and levying unpaid labour due to the state, more specifically to a *jāgirdār*, a pre-1951 government official given land tenure rights in lieu of a salary. Whenever there was a quarrel in the village, the headman tried to settle it informally. He also administrated minor cases of justice in the village, on occasion with the assistance of the lineage chiefs. In addition, the *dwāḥre* was responsible for the organisation of collective rituals and was honoured by the local population at the time of these ritual events. During the ten days of the Dasaĩ festival for instance, his house was the centre of village activity. He provided the buffalo slaughtered on the eighth day of the ceremonies in honour of the goddess Durgā. The head of the sacrificed animal itself was kept in his house (locally called *kot*, literally 'fort', for the occasion) until the tenth day, Vijayā Daśamī. The buffalo

was then shared between all members of the local Pahari community (cf. Chapter 10). Every person entitled to a share of the meat had to pay four to five rupees to refund the *dwāḥre* for the money spent to buy the buffalo. The headman himself was offered the head and the four legs of the animal.

During the Rana Period, this position was contracted out to the person who promised to raise the most in taxes (Pah. *thekkā bihigu)*. The headman was reappointed to his functions at the time of the Dasaĩ festival (September-October) so long as he regularly paid a fixed amount to the state. Nevertheless, it seems that the villagers were able to stop his reappointment by the Rana authorities in the case of abuse of power, internal turmoil or inability to organise the collective rituals on which the prosperity of the village depended. I came across one instance in which a headman of Sikharpa was ousted from his position by a majority of villagers dissatisfied with his leadership. The state administration provided the *dwāḥre* with the revenue of some fields, called *khāṅgi* or *bahāli*[7] *bũ,* throughout the time of his appointment. Members of the community were expected to work on these fields two days a year, one during the paddy harvest and the other during the harvest of wheat, and to give the *dwāḥre* a share (usually a leg) of every buffalo slaughtered on ceremonial occasions.

Of all Pahari villages, Kotkhu—the oldest one, according to the legend recounted above—was given precedence over the others. Accordingly, it was here that the various headmen, and, if necessary, the heads of hamlets, used to gather in case of quarrels and misalliances. This assembly, locally called *jāt guthi*, was the ultimate authority with regard to the ethnic group's internal affairs.

The headman was assisted by a certain number of delegates from each hamlet or ward. These persons, called *nāge* in Pahari (New. *nāyaḥ)*, represented the most influential lineages of the settlement. Although they needed to be confirmed by the *dwāḥre* (sometimes himself called *mūl nāge*, from *mūl*, 'main'), these functions tended to become hereditary. Conflicts with the headman of the village were rare since he could only rule the village with the support of the various descent groups. The *nāge* were entitled to levy taxes within their respective territories and help the *dwāḥre* in settling small cases of justice between co-villagers.

Pahari communities also had a municipal employee, called *māne* in

7 *Bahāli* in Nepali means 'Rent of a house; Appointment' (Turner, 437).

Pahari and *māhāṃ* in Newar. This person was directly appointed by the headman. He was in charge of the maintenance of paths within the village, he conveyed messages from one locality to another, and he helped the *dwāḥre* impose the payment of taxes and labour due to the state. He also served as forest warden, or *ban pā*. This employee was entitled to wear a metal insignia on his shoulder given by the government forestry office. Being responsible for such maintenance, he supervised teams of workers when pathways and wells needed repairs. The *māne* sometimes also had the responsibility of looking after the village livestock, of preventing the cows and buffaloes from eating crops in the fields when moved from one grazing spot to another *(sā pā)* on the uncultivated land within the vicinity of the village. He was paid in grain by the village headman and by the local population.

This local administrative structure was abolished in 1951, with the fall of the Rana regime, and was replaced by an elected village council, *gāũ pañcāyat*. The new system has lessened the autonomy of villages and annulled some (but not all) of the judiciary functions granted to the headman. Yet, the *dwāḥre* has not completely disappeared. He has lost his administrative and secular functions, but not entirely his religious ones. He still conducts the main collective ceremonies and directs major village rituals, during Dasaĩ for instance. Everyone in the locality still continues to pay homage to him and address him as the *dwāḥre*. As we will see later, the hamlet headmen have, for the most part, retained their former power.

As elsewhere, among other populations in Nepal, the Pahari village community expresses its unity during a number of festivals and ceremonies. The domestic and collective ceremonies held during Ṭhulo (Great) Dasaĩ, which falls in autumn, are one of these privileged moments. At that time, the villagers worship a representation of the goddess Durgā. Barley seeds are planted in the goddess's temple and the young stalks distributed ten days later, during Vijayā Daśamī, to all the population. The residents of each ward together buy a buffalo. They slaughter it and share the meat among themselves equally. In the past, it was at this time that the village headman used to renew the function of the *nāyaḥ* lineage headmen and of the municipal employee by tying turbans on their heads.

In May-June, on the sixth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jeṣṭha, the Pahari worship a series of land gods, Bhūme Deutā, residing in their villages. Although the ceremonies are celebrated mostly on a familial basis, the *dwāḥre* initiates them by cutting the throat of a chicken

in the centre of the village on behalf of the entire community.

Another important village ritual takes place at the beginning of the rainy season, during Gathāmugaḥ (the fourteenth day of the month of Śrāvaṇ, which falls in the dark fortnight), a typical Newar festival whose main purpose is to drive out demons and evil from every locality (Chapter 4). The villagers start nailing a piece of thorny agave plant and a *sisnu* nettle to the lintels of their respective houses. Then, the *nāyaḥ* lineage headmen assemble in front of the Durgā temple. They recite a long invocation and sacrifice a chicken. Once this rite has been completed, youngsters run in all directions to the outskirts of the village and hurl kindled bundles of straw while shouting loudly to frighten demons.

Some localities also celebrate long and remarkable communal festivals. For instance, in Kotkhu, the main ceremonial event of the religious calendar occurs at the end of the month of Caitra (March-April), just before the Nepali new year. It lasts for five days. A statue each of Hanumān and of Bhairava are carried through the village. The two gods are worshipped and animals are slaughtered in their honour.[8] Drums, flutes and cymbals accompany the rites and men dance until late at night. During these festivals, the village appears as a corporate group and a clearly defined unit.

Kinship groups

The household (Pah. *chẽ)* is the smallest unit of Pahari social life. Its members share the same hearth and use the same dishes for food. Resources and expenses are used and dealt with in common. The head of the family handles the revenue (finances) and makes all important decisions. The sons remain under his control until official separation.

In the village of Sikharpa, the household consists on average of six persons. Residence after marriage is virilocal—that is, in the husband's parents' house—followed rapidly by the independent settlement of the couple. Matrilocal residence—settlement in the bride's parents' house—

8 Animals are sometimes sacrificed to Hanumān among Newar farmer castes. In Kathmandu city for instance, Hanumān is represented on almost all Nāsaḥdyaḥ (god of music) altars. Jyāpus offer him *samay* (a series of food items eaten as snacks), including meat and alcohol. They do not bother if Hanumān is splashed with the blood of the sacrificied animals offered to Nāsaḥdyaḥ. Interestingly enough, Hanumān must not be touched by women either. Furthermore, it should be noted that in some cases, blood does not touch images of Nasaḥdyaḥ directly; a curtain is set up to protect the deity from direct contact with the blood of the sacrificed animals.

occurs, but its instance is less than two per cent. Such types of matrilocal residence are always occasioned by the absence of a male heir in the bride's family. They carry low prestige: the husband is a 'consort' of the wife, and has a low, unenviable status in the wife's parents' household. He acts as manager of the estate of his parents-in-law.

Generally speaking, it is the eldest son who first leaves the parents' house to settle independently. The younger ones stay with their father and mother and look after them until their deaths. The split in the household during the lifetime of the head of the household involves only a division of land. The rest of the property is divided among the other sons when the father dies. Traditionally, daughters are excluded from inheriting property from their parents. They receive, however, some cattle and even plots of land at the time of their wedding. These female belongings *(pewā)* are the exclusive property of women. They generally serve to give daughters financial security when they get married.

As is the case amongst most of the Newar, the genealogical depth of Pahari kin groups usually ranges from five to six generations only. Local society is divided into localised and exogamous patrilineages. These groups are not referred to by a specific proper noun. Agnates belonging to the same lineage are called *phunucā* (New. *phuki)*. Beyond the fifth or sixth generation, memory of a connection between relatives is usually lost. Exogamy consequently concerns only a small circle of agnatically related persons.

If a lineage member dies, his close agnates will remain impure for four to six days. During that period, they cannot enter a temple, make an offering to a deity, anoint their body or hair with oil, or eat soybeans or areca nuts. They become unpolluted on the fifth or seventh day after cremation. All members must, on that day, purify themselves and have their heads shaved by a Newar barber.

Each lineage, in principle at least, has two divinities that are particular to it. One of these deities accepts blood sacrifices, the other accepts only vegetarian offerings. Both are called *didyaḥ* (New. *digudyaḥ)* and receive special worship once a year, during the full moon of the month of Māgh (January-February). The cult site is located outside the village, generally in a westerly direction, on a field. Lineage gods are represented by a series of aniconic stones, ellipsoid in shape, placed side by side. The lineage members gather on this site during the annual clan feast. It is the eldest man within the kin group, the *thakāli*, who arranges for the proper performance of the rites as priest. He is careful not to

splash the vegetarian deity with the blood of animal sacrifices. Afterwards, all the close agnates participate in a feast. The next day, the six oldest men of the descent group have their heads shaved by a Newar barber and ritually eat the duck or the rooster sacrificed the day before. The meat is shared in accordance with seniority: the *thakāli* takes the right side of the head of the animal, the second oldest, the left side of the head, the third, the right thigh, the fourth, the left thigh, the fifth, the right leg, and the sixth, the left leg. Just before eating, the *thakāli* offers duck or hen eggs, depending on the lineage in question, to the deity who accepts blood.

In several cases, this worship of the *didyaḥ* takes place at the household level rather than on a lineage basis. A family can easily split from the kin group by taking a new pair of stones from a nearby river and establishing them in a new place, for instance on the border of a field, with minimal consecration. The person who conducts the transfer has simply to light an oil lamp in front of the original deity. He takes this lit lamp up to the river and then carries it to the new site along with the new stones *(dyaḥ sālegu)*.

The *didyaḥ* lineage and familial deities are also worshipped at the time of birth and of the male initiation ceremony, called *kaytā pūjā* (New. and Pah.), which marks the full integration of a boy into the community and his entrance into adulthood. In the first case, only an egg is offered. During initiation, a goat is slaughtered.

The *didyaḥ* divinities play a dominant role in Pahari social organisation. It is mainly through and around them that the descent groups unite, congregate, and separate. As discussed previously, these deities are multiplied as soon as there is segmentation in a lineage group. The proliferation of small worshipping groups is undoubtedly an ongoing process. Interestingly, however, the Pahari ethnic community is divided into two distinct groups: the 'duck-killers', *hayṃ syāpīṃ*, and the 'chicken-killers', *kḥā syāpīṃ*. The first group kills ducks and presents duck eggs to their *didyaḥ*, the second kills chickens and offers chicken eggs. The fowl are sacrificed by slitting their throats and then sawing off the head with a knife. The 'duck-killers' are conceded slight superiority over the 'chicken-killers'.[9] In each village, the two worshipping units have their own cult sites. A hypothesis worth considering is that these two groups

9 In the food hierarchy, duck meat is superior to chicken meat. For instance, Buddhist Vajrācārya priests eat duck, not chicken.

of persons originally belonged to two moieties, the 'duck killers' being the elder and the 'chicken killers', the younger branch. Whatever the case may be, these ritually defined ensembles today do not act as corporate groups in any way. Their respective members are unable to establish a genealogic link between themselves and are not bound by a set of obligations to each other. The rapid fragmentation of the kin groups from the fifth or sixth generation onwards is clearly a distinctive feature of the Pahari and, generally speaking, of the Newar.

Kinship terminology

The 25 kinship terms of reference used by the Pahari are as follows:

1) *āju bā*: an ancestor who is a great-great-grandfather or beyond. This phrase is made up of two basic kinship terms: *āju (*New. *ājā)*, which means both 'grand-father' and 'great-grandfather'; and the Newar *bā*, 'father'. It must, however, be considered a basic term rather than a derivative one.
2) *ijumā*: an ancestor who is a great-great-grandmother or beyond. Like the term given above, this name is made up of *iju-* (New. *āji)*, meaning both 'grandmother' and 'great-grandmother'; and the Newar *mā*, meaning 'mother'. The radical *iju* is probably to be linked with *iya-ajhaju*, an ancient Newar word quoted by Nepali (1965: 236) as referring to 'great-great-grand-parents'.
3) *bā*: father
   3a. *dhā-bā (dhā*: 'great'): grandfather (Sikharpa: *dho-bā)*, father's elder brother, mother's elder sister's husband.
   3b. *cye-bā (cye* or *ce*: 'small'): father's younger brother, mother's younger sister's husband.
4) *mā*: mother
   4a. *dhā-mā*: grandmother, mother's elder sister, father's elder brother's wife.
   4b. *cye-mā*: mother's younger sister, father's younger brother's wife.
5) *pāju*: mother's brother, father's sister's husband.
6) *nini*: father's sister, mother's brother's wife.
7) *dāju* (or *dāi)*: elder brother, all male consanguineal relatives belonging to the ego's generation and older than ego. To distinguish among them with regard to seniority, the following Nepali words are used: *jeṭho* for the eldest, *māhīlo* for the second eldest, *sāhilo* for the third, *kāhilo* for the fourth, *thāhīlo* for the fifth, and *kāncho* for the youngest.

8) *tā:* elder sister, all female consanguineal relatives belonging to the same generation as ego and older than ego. The eldest such relative will be referred to by the Nepali *jeṭhi*, the second eldest as *māhīli*, and so on.

9) *manā*: younger brother (see also 9b), all male and female consanguineal relatives belonging to the same generation as the ego and younger than the ego.
   9a. *māmā manā* (*māmā*: 'woman'): younger sister.
   9b. *bābā manā* (*bābā*: address term for father): younger brother. This term is used rarely, and then only to differentiate between 9a and 9b.

10) *pī* or *pīṛi*: elder brother's wife when the ego is male, husband's elder brother's wife when the ego is female.
   10a. *swosāpīṃ (swosā)*: mother-in-law, wife's elder brother's wife (for a male ego).

11) *yī*: younger brother's wife (male ego), wife's younger brother's wife.

12) *buṛu*: elder sister's husband (male ego), husband's elder sister's husband (female ego).

13) *ji*: daughter's husband, younger sister's husband (male ego), husband's younger sister's husband (female ego).

14) *swosā*: all in-law parents of the wife and of the husband, followed by the corresponding kinship term. For instance, *swosa bā*: wife's father, husband's father, *swosā manā*: wife's younger sister and brother, husband's younger sister and brother, etc.
   14a. *sāṛ dāju*: elder sister's husband (male ego). *Sāṛ* comes from the Nepali *sāsu*: in-laws.
   14b. *sāṛ manā*: younger sister's husband (male ego).
   14c. *swostā* (perhaps a word derived from *swosā)*: husband's or wife's elder sister; rarely used.

15) *samdhi*: parents of daughter-in-law or son-in-law, as the case may be.

16) *kwaũ* or *kaũ*: husband.

17) *mujũ* (or *mujā)*: wife. Grierson (1909: 258) gives *majū.*

18) *puro*: son (in Kodkhu: *kāpro).* Grierson (*ibid*: 258) gives *kiā-pro.*

19) *mhaymcā*: daughter, brother's daughter (male ego), sister's daughter (female ego).

20) *kāycā*: brother's son (male ego), sister's son (female ego).

21) *bhāncā*: sister's children (male ego), brother's children (female ego).

22) *bhau* (or *bhomcā*): son's wife.

23) *chigā*: grand-children.

24) *chuīṃ*: great-grand-children.
25) *huīṃ*: great-great-grand-children.

This vocabulary of kinship does not differ fundamentally from the corresponding Newar terms, either lexically or semantically. For the overall terminological structure, I refer the reader to my analysis of Newar kinship terminology (Toffin 1975*c* and 1984: 167-172).[10] Here I will restrict myself to the major dissimilarities.

Lexically, eight new terms emerge that do not exist in the Newar terminology: *manā*, *yī*, *kwaū*, *mujū*, *chigā*, *puro*, *bhāncā* and *buṛu*. The first five reveal Tibeto-Burman connections. The last two are Nepali: *bhāncā* comes probably from *bhānji/bhānja*, words used to refer to sister's children; and *buṛu* is perhaps derived from the Nepali adjective *buṛhā*, which means 'old'. The origin of *puro* is unclear—perhaps it is derived from the Sanskrit *putra*, or 'son'.

Another significant difference with Newar relates to the terms for in-laws. Newar has five words to designate different brothers- and sisters-in-law, whereas Pahari has seven. The two additional terms are *yī*: younger brother's wife (male ego), wife's younger brother's wife (male ego); and *buru*: elder sister's husband (male ego), husband's elder sister's husband (female ego). One should note that *pī*, scarcely used in Newar, and always in a restricted sense, is here in common usage and takes on a wider meaning. By and large, the Pahari take greater consideration of the principles of age and sex than do the Newar. One is tempted to see in this tendency an influence of the kinship terminology of the Nepali language.

Equivalences between, on the one hand, mother's brother's wife and father's sister, and father's sister's husband and the mother's brother, on the other, are found among some Newar, especially in groups like the Swãgumi of Pyangaon (Toffin 1975*c*: 143-144). They reveal the key role played by alliances among these groups. They also reflect a prescribed system of marriage between cross-cousins, in the case of men either with the mother's brother's daughter, or with the father's sister's daughter. In this regard, the Pahari language does not have the additional word *maleju*, used often in Newar, and goes further than Newar in the non-distinction between affines and consanguines.

The specific identification between younger brother and younger sis-

10 See also Gellner and Quigley, 1995: 329-331.

ter—both called *manā*—is something unknown in both Newar and Nepali. Age takes precedence here over sex-based distinction. The existence of this word is inconsistent with the rest of Pahari's relationship terminology and cannot be explained at present.

Marriage patterns and ceremonies

In principle, Pahari peasants marry (Pah. *bihā yegu)* within their ethnic group. Though forbidden, marriage outside the community nonetheless sometimes occurs. In 1976, I estimated that six per cent of the marriages in the village of Sikharpa were inter-caste or inter-ethnic in nature. The social status of the children of such unions depends on the respective positions of the father and mother in the Nepali caste system. If a Pahari man marries a woman of a higher rank (Śreṣṭha, Chetrī, Jyāpu, etc), the marriage will not be sanctioned by the group, but the children will belong to the father's caste. If, on the other hand, the wife is of a lower rank (low Newar castes, for instance), the children will take the caste of the mother and their father will be expelled from the Pahari community. If the mother is a Tamang, a group considered by the Pahari to be slightly inferior to them, the children will retain the caste of their father provided they do not eat food cooked by their mother. Matrimonial relations between Pahari women and Chetrī, Newar or Tamang men are also not infrequent. Children will then be recognised as Pahari only if the father is of a higher rank. Sometimes, the word *khatrī* (Nep.) is prefixed to the surnames of the descendants of such unions, in order to specify their mixed origins. This does not prevent them from marrying within the Pahari community.

What about the rules of marriage within the patrilineal line? The customary legal usage in traditional Nepal forbids marriage between agnates within a range of fourteen generations in the case of persons who wear the sacred thread (Bāhun, Ṭhakurī and Chetrī). For pure castes and ethnic groups of lower status, the prohibition is, in principle, reduced to seven generations (Gaborieau 1977: 224-225). As for the Pahari, marriage occurs among even closer relatives, since the rules of lineage exogamy in force in their society only concern groups of fifth to sixth generation depth. There is thus no ban on marrying an agnate who is distant by six, and even five, generations.

In the maternal line, the Pahari start to marry from the third generation onwards. Marriage to first degree matrilateral cross-cousins is hence forbidden. An informant told me: 'To marry one's mother's brother's

daughter is condemned as vehemently as eating cow's meat.' Marriage by exchange (New. *hilā-bulā*, Pah. *hilo-palo)*, in which two men exchange sisters, is uncommon. This kind of matrimonial alliance, it is said, induces quarrels between the two families concerned. Levirate marriage, by which a woman marries one of her husband's relatives after his death, is prohibited. On the other hand, sororate marriage, in which a man marries one of his wife's sisters, is widely practised. Interestingly, the Pahari organise marriage when the mates are of an early age: 13 to 14 years for girls, 15 to 16 for boys. Sometimes these unions, which are forbidden by law, are more markedly 'child marriages'.

The rate of territorial exogamy is noticeably higher among the Pahari than among Jyāpu communities. According to the study I carried out in Sikharpa, 55 per cent of weddings concern a Pahari from outside the locality. As nearly everywhere in Hindu Nepali society, marriage in a village far away from the natal home (Nep. *māiti)* is resented for being extremely hard for the young bride. Such women have not only to leave their parents, but the lack of support from home often makes it necessary for them to behave in a submissive manner to her in-laws. It is a fact that women married outside of their natal villages work for their parents-in-law to a considerably greater extent than do those married within their parents' village.

To set up contact with the young girl's family for the first time, the boy's father takes the help of an intermediary called a *lami*. An elder brother is preferable; if none is available, an agnate will do. The *lami* pays a first visit to the girl's maternal uncle. It is this relative, the intermediary automatically chosen from the girl's side, who represents his niece's lineage during all negotiations. If the marriage is finalised, these two go-betweens will be given a complete set of clothing from their respective relatives.

The first visit by the *lami* to the girl's parents is called *koṃ chine yāygu*, 'to tie with a bottle of alcohol'. The go-between brings with him a bottle of rice alcohol and puts forward his request in a disguised form. If his host accepts a drink, the marriage is considered feasible. The next step is the *cār-dām* (Nep.) (Pah. *dāṃ pirā)* This word designates a symbolic amount of money, 54 *paisā*,[11] which is offered by the boy's father to the girl's father.[12] This presentation is considered an advance on fu-

11 One rupee is divided into 100 *paisā*.

12 In some cases, the *cār-dām* takes place in the fiancée's maternal uncle's house.

ture wedding expenses. An auspicious date for the wedding is also chosen on that day. Preference is given to the months of Phālgun (February-March), Baiśākh (April-May) or Asār (June-July). Kārtik (October -November), Caitra (March-April) and Śrāvaṇ (July-August) are prohibited. The horoscopes of the two young persons are rarely consulted to see if they match each other. An eldest son is not to be married in the month of Jeṣṭha.

The *cār-dām* represents an essential moment in matrimonial negotiations. From that day onwards, the girl belongs socially to the boy's family. If, for one reason or another, the engagement is broken, the girl's parents will be obliged to pay compensation to the wife-takers. If the fiancée dies, her funeral will be organised and celebrated by the boy's side and not by her natal home, or *māiti* (Pah. *thu chẽ).*

On the fixed day, a dozen members of the wife-taker's family, including close friends of the boy, move in a procession to the girl's house. The groom (Nep. *dulā)* does not join in this wedding procession. The girl's parents welcome their guests and feast them with alcohol and a range of festive foods. Then the boy's relatives give to their in-laws the *lākhā*, which includes an amount of money (50 to 60 rupees in 1976) and a set of clothes and jewels: two skirts, two blouses, two belts, earrings and a *phuli*, a golden nose stud that only married women wear. These presents would have been purchased in the nearby bazaar some weeks beforehand, by the parents of both the boy and the girl, and by the girl's maternal uncle. The clothes and jewels are given to the bride, the money goes to her relatives. The closest relatives receive a greater amount than the more remote ones. This money-giving is reciprocated the next day, when the wife-giver's party gives the boy's relatives double the amount.[13] It is the girl's maternal uncle who is in charge of the distribution of this sum. On that day, the uncle receives seven cubits of white cloth with which a turban will be made. His wife receives cloth to make a blouse.

The bride's parents and their neighbours then present the young girl with a *kwasaḥ*, a kind of dowry which includes clothes, a sheet, a blanket, straw mats, various utensils, and kitchenware. The exact items depend on the family's resources. The maternal uncle also usually gives one head of livestock to his niece on this occasion. If he is well-off, he

13 The custom of such presentations also exists among Newars (Nepali 1965: 214-215). The doubling of the gifts by the bride's party, however, seems to be specific to the Pahari.

may donate a plot of land. Sometimes, he waits until the birth of his niece's first child to make this gift.

At about 4 pm, the wife-takers' party returns to its house with the bride. Just before leaving, the girl's maternal uncle helps his niece cross the threshold of her natal home. The nuptial procession, called *janti* in Pahari and Nepali, is accompanied by Pahari musicians playing cymbals, flutes and drums, a Parbatiyā Damāī band, and a pair of Newar Kusle oboe-players. The group visits the sanctuaries of the locality and pays homage to all their respective deities. The bride usually walks all the way. In some cases, however, she is carried in a palanquin by Newar butchers hired from a nearby village. She wears a red sari and covers her head with a white cotton shawl.

I will base the following description on a wedding ceremony I attended in 1975 in Kotkhu village. The main rituals take place in the courtyard of the boy's house, under a temporary shelter made of bamboo and straw. The groom is dressed in white; his head, which has been shaved beforehand, is wrapped in a turban. He sits to the bride's right. The young couple, the girl 14 and the boy 15, seems terribly embarrassed to be the focus of attention for the audience assembled around. They do not dare to watch the proceedings taking place and are guided in everything by their respective go-between *lami*. The bride hides her face with her shawl. In the beginning, the couple's wrists are tied together with a cord made from a variety of nettle (Pah. *nhāylu)*. Then the girl's maternal uncle cuts the throats of both a hen and a rooster in front of them and smears their hands with the blood of the sacrificed fowl.[14] He entreats them never to abandon each other. Afterwards, he cuts the nettle bond with a knife (Pah. *kā pālegu)*. At this point, three agnates from the groom's household each perform a mimic representation in front of the couple. The first mimes a man cutting a tree with an axe, the second uses a *khukuri* knife to mime the chopping of wood into logs and the third acts out a hunting scene with a miniature bow. The three instruments used are viewed as emblematic of Pahari life and the scenes symbolise the traditional livelihoods of the group. The couple touches each of these men. This ritual can be understood as a means of reinforcing the attachment of the new couple to the community at this decisive moment in their lives.

14 A similar sacrifice is performed at Limbu wedding ceremonies in far eastern Nepal (Caplan 1974: 193).

Subsequently, the boy anoints red powder over the middle parting of his wife's hair three times. As is known, this vermillion mark above the forehead indicates the married status of a woman almost everywhere in Nepal. The couple must then change places. The groom picks the bride up and places her to his right. The bride bows down in front of her husband and touches his feet with her forehead (Pah. *bhākhi yegu)* three times. In exchange, the boy gives her a five-rupee note. Later, in the boy's house, offerings are made to the lineage deity and the local Gaṇeśa. The married couple presents these deities with a banana leaf plate filled with rice, flower petals, incense and ceremonial food that has been served to the guests. They also worship the five metals, *pañca ratna*, represented by some metal powder placed in front of them. Towards the end of these ceremonies, the bride and the groom drink rice-beer from the same bowl. They exchange handfuls of rice and the five-metal powder thrice. Then the boy puts a *ṭikā* on his wife's forehead. The two go-betweens, who sit just to the side of the newly married couple, counsel the boy and girl to stay together all their lives. All these ceremonies, which emphasise the establishment of a firm union between the bride and groom, are known in Pahari and Nepali by the word *lagan*. It is worth noting that no priest, either Hindu or Buddhist, is called upon to perform the rituals. Everything is done within the community.

The feast takes place in the same courtyard of the groom's house as did the rituals described above. It gathers agnates, friends and some of the husband's neighbours. The bride's maternal uncle, sometimes accompanied by his wife, are the only representatives from her side. The guests (about 100 persons in the wedding observed) sit on the ground in three distinct rows. Food is served on leaf plates. It includes flattened rice, soybeans, dried radishes, fried garlic, ginger, *taḥkhāḥ* buffalo meat (a compulsory dish for weddings), and rice-beer. Just before starting to eat, the couple makes a round of all the persons present. The bride bows down in front of each of them, puts her head to their feet, and gives them a handful of flattened rice and a piece of sugarcane. The guests reciprocate by giving her a five *paisā* coin. After that, the bride is officially recognised as a member of her husband's lineage. She will be allowed to participate in the rituals of the group. The boy follows her at some distance. He, too, has to bow down in front of each guest, who in turn give him five *paisā*.

The next day or the day after, the couple pays a visit to the bride's parents. The girl's maternal uncle, whose role is crucial in all of these

ceremonies and visits, welcomes them and anoints their foreheads with vermillion. A meal is served with food brought by the boy's friends. At this moment the groom's *lami* offers an earthenware jar filled with rice-beer to the bride's parents. A sum of 54 *paisā* is placed in a leaf cup that caps the jar. This prestation is called *duru mū* (Pah.), or *duru lākhā* (New.)—literally, the 'price of the milk'. It reimburses the in-laws for having fed the girl milk during her childhood.[15]

This type of wedding, which involves musical bands, copious feasts and a series of reciprocal gifts, is the nicest (Pah. *bhala yegu)* and the most expensive. Other, simpler types that involve less expenses are also frequently organised. In all cases, divorce is extremely common. In Sikharpa, more than 50 per cent of the adult Pahari population has married more than once. There is no prejudice against the dissolution of an unsatisfactory union. As a rule, the sons of the divorced couple stay with the father, the daughters with the mother. If the separation occurs when a boy is still in his infancy, the mother keeps him until he reaches the age of three or four, and then sends him to his father. If a wife elopes, the husband has to be compensated for the expenses he incurred in getting married to her. This amount is calculated by adding the wedding expenses to the *lākhā* presents given to the bride. A divorce document is sometimes signed in the presence of the village chief.

A man can take a second wife without fearing censure. The arrival of a young co-wife may present some advantages to the first one since it greatly reduces the burden of domestic chores. If the first wife does not accept the new situation and returns to her natal home, the husband is expected to send her cereals and vegetables on a regular basis. Polygyny, however, is rare. It usually occurs only when no child—neither daughter nor son—is born. These subsequent unions do not involve important ceremonies. Remarriage by a widow is permitted and does not lead to reprobation.

Uterine and affinal relationships

As underlined above, the maternal uncle plays a key role at the time of his niece's wedding. A proverb, borrowed from Nepali, asserts: 'Father and mother give birth, maternal uncle gives fate' *(janma dine āmā-bā,*

15 According to G.S. Nepali (1965: 215): 'Among the Du(n)yeeya(n) [Putuwārs], in addition to the *lakha* or its cost in cash thereof, a sum of five rupees is paid to the bride's mother and they call it "payment for the mother's milk". But this payment for the mother's milk is not made by other Newars in the Valley.'

karma dine māmā). The importance of the uncle is probably due to the fact that a woman becomes a member of adult society, with full social and religious status, only after marriage. Before that moment, she does not submit as strictly as the other members of her lineage to the various caste rules, in particular the rejection of rice and other types of boiled food from persons belonging to lower castes. Similarly, a woman is entitled to full death ceremonies, with all the required rituals, only after being integrated into her husband's household. The reason for this particular situation is that, among Paharis, the girl neither undergoes the seclusion ceremony at the time of her first menstrual period nor the *ihi* mock-marriage, two important female initiation rites of the Newar.[16] The role of the maternal uncle is thus clear: he transforms his niece into an adult, a socially and ritually responsible person, at the time of her wedding.[17]

The mother's brother assumes the same function for his uterine nephew. He guides his entry into adulthood and presides over his definitive incorporation into his parent's lineage. The only difference is that, whereas such integration takes place upon marriage for women, it occurs for boys at the time of two specific life-cycle rituals performed before their marriage: the first is the head-shaving ceremony and the second, the male initiation. In other words, the boy attains full social status, in a staggered process, before his sisters. At each of these ceremonies, he is given gifts by his maternal uncle through a highly formalised series of prestations.

The first head-shaving (Pah. *busi* or *buswā khāygu)* takes place at the age of three. On that day the boy receives a cap, a *ṭopi*, from his maternal uncle. The uncle also has to provide ritual implements for the ceremony and five sticks of dried fish to be offered to the divinities. Furthermore, he has to cut the child's hair with scissors. Interestingly, the father's sister's husband—like the maternal uncle, this man is called *pāju*—also has to cut part of the child's hair if he is present. In return, the mother's brother receives half a chicken. This ritual cutting of a boy's hair is usually performed on the tenth day of the Dasaĩ festivities, in autumn. The hair is placed under the ridge beam, the *dhuri*, of the house.

The boy's initiation ceremony (Pah. *kaytā pūjā* or *pūjā nāginu*, or

16 Similarly, the Swāgumi of the village of Pyangaon do not perform the *ihi* ceremonies for their daughters (Toffin 1984: 127). As for the Balāmi, this issue is debatable (see Chapter 7).
17 Ritual gifts given by the maternal uncle to his niece at her wedding play an important role in the overall system of kinship. They enhance the enduring privileged relations between wife-givers and wife-takers from one generation to another. See Dumont (1975: 210).

nāgyo) takes place during the full moon of Māgh, in conjunction with the annual worship of the lineage deity. On that day, the maternal uncle offers his sister's son a loin-cloth (Pah. *pise)* and a white turban. He is also expected to bring two loads of cooked food for the feast. He serves the guests himself during this ceremonial meal. His sister's household reciprocates by giving him the leg of a goat and cooked food. This rite is performed when the boy reaches the age of seven. In some cases, it can be postponed and undergone jointly by two or three boys belonging to the same family. The children being initiated, however, must all be of an odd number of years.

The relationships between the maternal uncle and his nephew are sometimes pervaded with ambiguity. It is commonly held that the child whose first teeth appear early risks being hostile to his uncle. To allay such a risk, the uncle prepares a dish of meat, vegetables and condiments when the child is of an early age. He waits until his nephew has eaten the food before taking the child in his arms.[18]

After completing initiations and marriages, the maternal uncle no longer has any obligations towards his sister's children. The chief relationships are now those between the parents-in-law. The interactions between a wife and her husband's parents do not significantly differ from those thoroughly described by Bennett (1978). They need not be discussed here. The relations between a son-in-law and his wife's mother and father are less known and are finally just as important as the former if one is to understand the overall affinal system. The husband must behave in a reserved manner before his wife's parents: he refrains from speaking too much, from eating in a gluttonous manner, from asking questions, and so forth. In addition, the son-in-law brings presents (chicken, potatoes, eggs) whenever he visits his wife's parents. He must also help them in farming their land, especially at harvest time. He is expected, for instance, to distribute areca-nuts and cigarettes to the wage labourers working in their fields. Whoever evades these obligations is severely condemned by the community. Finally, it is the son-in-law who carries the corpses of his wife's father and mother from their house up to the cremation pyre at the time of their funerals.[19]

18 According to the Majhi (Kuswar) porters I spoke to during my fieldwork among the Pahari, this custom is familiar to other Nepali hill groups, such as the Tamang. It will be interesting to confirm this information since it has not yet been reported, to my knowledge, in ethnographic literature.

19 Sons-in-law are bound by the same obligations among the Newar Jyāpu farming caste and the Swāgumi of Pyangaon.

This is indeed a very significant requirement amidst the intricate kinship ties revealed by death rituals.

Such a relationship differs widely from that among North-Indian groups and high Hindu Parbatiyā castes. Among these communities, gifts repeatedly follow the direction that the women takes—that is, from the wife-givers to the wife-takers. The son-in-law, *jwāī*, of the Bāhun-Chetrī is often viewed as a person of superior status by the wife's parents. He is almost equated with a god. Among Paharis, on the other hand, the son-in-law works almost as a servant for his wife's parents throughout his life, in ceremonial as well as in other contexts. Reciprocity is thus introduced in the system of exchange between wife-takers and wife-givers. This reciprocal orientation in the world of social relations presents some similarities to a symmetrical (or bilateral) matrimonial prescriptive system where sisters are exchanged. Those who have received wives are indebted and must ritually serve those who have given.

Death associations

Pahari death associations, called *pule gū*[20] or *puilo*, are in charge of arranging the funerals for their members. They place the dead body upon the funeral pyre, assist in the cremation and console the family of the deceased. They are principally made up of men, but wives automatically become members of their husbands' group upon marriage. Each *pule gū* is headed by the three of the group's oldest persons, called the *thakāli*.

The village of Sikharpa has three death associations named for the three constitutive divisions of the village respectively: the upper *(thasya)*, the lower *(kwase)*, and the central part *(dāryā)*.[21] However, membership does not correspond entirely to the actual distribution of the population between these three geographical units. For instance, the death association attached to the upper part includes some members residing in the central and lower divisions of Sikharpa. A number of families have actually moved from one part to another since the founding of the village and kept their affiliation with the group connected to their original topographical division. Besides, a *pule gū* is not completely hereditary, even

20 *Pule gū*: from *pule*, meaning 'to burn'; and *gu*, which is the common abbreviated form for *guthi* among Jyāpu Newars.

21 This three-way distinction recalls the division of the old city of Kathmandu into an upper part, a lower part and, in between, a central part *(dathu twāḥ)*. As elsewhere among the Newar, the upper/lower opposition refers in Sikharpa to the upstream/downstream direction of the nearest river.

though sons do generally become members of their father's death group. In the case of a quarrel, a man is free to sever his connection with his parents' death society and be accepted into another funerary grouping. In the end, the only requirement is to belong to a death association, and no more than one at a time.

The members of death associations assemble several times a year. The main ceremonial event takes place at the end of the month of Pauṣ (December-January) and at the beginning of Māgh (January-February). It lasts for three days and is performed in an atmosphere of intense excitement (Toffin 1997). It includes a series of feasts, ceremonial snacks, slaughtering of animals, drinking of both brewed and distilled spirits in great quantities, and visits to one's parents. When I attended these celebrations, in February 1976, the villagers were so drunk that the rituals ended in a state of general confusion, but with no violence, unlike at most Newar death *guthi* communal feasts. The festive meals and the rites take place in roofless, eight-metre-wide enclosures, oval in shape, and made up of branches fixed onto wooden posts to support the temporary walls made of branches, leaves and *syāulā*, green twigs. This space is sacred. Non-Paharis are forbidden from entering. Clay rice-beer-jars and flat drinking-cups symbolise the *guthi* deities. They are called Bhailaḥdyaḥ, a divinity identified by the Pahari either with Bhairava (New. Bhailaḥdyaḥ) or with Bhimsen. They are believed to preside over the association and to prevent the souls of the dead from perturbing the living. Interestingly, these deities are always represented in dual form, with one male and one female representation. The festivities end with a ceremonial sharing of the head of the sacrificed animal, usually a buffalo, among the elders of the group. This head would have been offered to Bhailaḥdyaḥ one or two days beforehand. The meal is taken in silence and according to prescribed rituals.

A new meeting occurs a few days later, on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Māgh (January-February). All members of the association proceed to their chief's household and subsequently go to the nearby forest with their axes to fetch wood. The wood, once chopped, is stored in a special place, often a windowless hut, called *guspi* in Pahari *(gũsĩpau* in Lalitpur Newar). It is mainly situated on the edge of a field. This wood is used at the time of the cremation of the affiliates. The members of the *pule gū* group then attend a communal feast.

These festivities are financed by a system of contributions. Everyone must supply snacks and food for the feasts. Moreover, three persons are

in charge, each in turn in yearly rotation, of preparing the rice-beer and the *capāti* flat breads. These persons, called *pāḥlā*, have to arrange for the kitchen utensils and must also serve the food to all present.

These mortuary associations are fundamental to the social organisation of the Pahari and weave a tight network of bonds and obligations between members of the community. Socially, a person identifies as much by his belonging to a *pule gū* as by his lineage. This pattern of funeral associations also maintains social control within the group, since their chiefs are consulted whenever a conflict or a debatable marriage occurs in the group. Members who have eaten food cooked by someone of lower status or who have married such a person are, for instance, excluded from the group. Such an exclusion is critical as the excommunicated individual will be cut off from most of his circle of kin in the village and will not be sure of having anyone to carry out his own mortuary rituals properly. *Guthi (gū)* thus contribute greatly to creating and preserving the governing ethos of the community.[22]

Paharis in the wider Nepali caste system

The 1854 Muluki Ain ranked the Pahari, like the other Tibeto-Burman-speaking minorities and the Newar castes *(newār jāt)*, among the alcohol-drinking *(matwāli)* pure castes. They are thus of lower status than the twice-born persons who wear the sacred thread and to whom alcohol is forbidden *(tāgādhāri)*. In addition, the Code establishes an important distinction among the *matwāli* alcohol drinkers: between those who are enslavable, *māsinyā*, and those who by their status cannot be enslaved, *namāsinyā*.[23] The Pahari, Bhotiya, Chepang, Majhi, Danuwar, Hayu, Kumhal and Darai belong to the first group and are thus relegated to a lower position among the pure caste category.

Although it was officially abolished in 1963, the caste system (Nep. *jāti pati* or *jāt pātko calan)* still permeates the whole society and continues to dictate most of the hierarchical relations between groups. The Pahari are not an exception to this and appear as cautious about caste rules related to food, contact, sex and marriage, as other Hindu castes. They share a full hookah pipe, with all its component parts, only with

22 Other *gū* associations are formed for the sake of performing specific ritual activities. In the village of Kodkhu, for instance, thirteen associations of this type have ritual functions at the time of collective ceremonies. A number of them are connected to the celebration of the main village festival, at the full moon of Caitra (March-April). Each one has only a few members.

23 Slavery was abolished in Nepal in 1924.

full members of their own community. They do not accept rice cooked by persons situated at a lower rank than themselves in the hierarchy. The do not even accept rice from the hands of castes such as the Tamang, the Gurung, and the Danuwar, who nonetheless hold the same rank in the Code as themselves. They consider all these groups as *syāno jāt*, 'small castes'. They eat food cooked by Śreṣṭhas and Jyāpus, but refuse rice prepared by Citrakār painters and Mānandhar oil-pressers. Impure caste members do not have access to their houses.

Paharis today live in a multi-ethnic and a multi-caste social environment, Hindu-dominated, which consists mostly of Parbatiyās (Bāhun-Chetrī, Kāmī, Damāī), Newars and Tamangs. Newars are money-lenders and control local commercial exchanges. For a long time now, Bāhun-Chetrīs have settled in these areas, already populated by Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups (mostly Tamang and Pahari), and it is they who run most of the local councils. Bāhuns are called Buramḥū in Pahari; Chetrīs, Dya; Tamangs, Sujā(ta); and Magars, Mogo or Mago.

Paharis do occupy, however, a dominant position in the localities they live in. Their primacy is clearly demonstrated by the privileged relations they maintain with a number of castes or ethnic groups which provide them with ritual and other services. This relationship, based on exchange of services for goods, is integrated with a client and patron system of the *jajmānī* type and a traditional subsistence economy.

Buddhist and Hindu priests

Paharis villagers do not call upon the services of outside priests at the time of the ceremony for the removal of pollution. They summon a Buddhist Newar Vajrācārya, their customary priest, only for the *śrāddha* mortuary rites, i.e., 45 days *(latyā)*, six months *(khulā)* and one year *(dakilā)* after the cremation of the dead body. It seems, however, that a number of Paharis have gradually started to call upon Brāhmaṇs to conduct these rituals, especially the *śrāddha* performed a year after death. These Hindu priests, who occupy the highest status in the Nepali caste system, mostly come from the Parbatiyā community. Rājopādhyāya Newar Brāhmaṇs can also be called upon at times, if available. For a long time now, the Pahari—like the Balāmi, studied in the previous chapter—have also used the services of Hindu sacerdotal specialists on some special occasions, such as the pacification rite when a person has expired under unusual circumstances or when the deceased's funerary rites have not been conducted properly. Similarly, they call Nepali-speaking

Brāhmaṇs to conduct *rudrī pūjā*, in homage to Mahādev, upon completing the construction of a new house. All these ritual specialists are paid in money (cash) (Nep. and Pah. *dakṣiṇā)* and in uncooked food (Nep. and Pah. *sidhā)* such as potatoes, bananas, salt, clarified butter, curcuma, and ginger.

Newar barber

Nau, Newar barbers, are summoned by Paharis to remove pollution and celebrate auspicious events. These ceremonies include the boy's initiation, marriage, nearly all mortuary rites, festivities associated with death societies and rituals connected to the celebration of the lineage deities. The barber shaves the head of his client, sometimes along with his beard and eyebrows. During lineage deity celebrations, he shaves the head of the *thakāli*, the eldest person in the kin group, and of the *pāḥlā* turnholders. His wife cuts the toe-nails of the *thakāli* and paints the toes of all present, men and women, in red (Pah. *hala tayegu)*. Each barber has his own clients, and on the client's side this relationship is generally passed down from father to son. These artisans are paid in kind *(bāli)*, twice a year, in rice and in wheat (about 10 to 12 *mānā* of grain each time[24]). Wood can be given instead at the following rate: one load for twelve *mānā* of grain (1975). Each time they come to fulfil a ritual service, the Nau also receives a share of the ceremonial meal, some extra flattened rice for his family, and, in some cases, a small amount of money.

Newar butchers

As previously stated, Khaḍgī, Newar butchers, from the surrounding areas are sometimes hired by Paharis to carry a bride in a palanquin from her natal home to the groom's house. Yet, contrary to what is done among some pure Newar castes (Chapter 5), the umbilical cord of a new-born baby is cut not by a butcher's wife but by a member of the family itself. In principle, it is cut by the mother-in-law, or else by the sister-in-law or the father. The umbilical cord and the placenta are subsequently buried in a secret place by the father. This is done at night and should not be seen by anyone. Two or three days later, the woman, who has delivered, also has to go at night to make an offering to Diri Ijimā (Ajimā), the goddess associated with babies. She offers a leaf-cup filled with ginger, salt and an inflamed wick. The site chosen is close to the spot where the umbilical

24 This corresponds roughly to 4 kg of grain.

cord is buried. She has to press her breasts three times to shed some drops of her milk into this leaf-cup. These offerings are also kept hidden.

Musicians
For weddings, the Pahari hire Parbatiyā Damāī or Newar Kusle musicians. Each musician receives about 4 kg of grain a year. At the time of the marriage ceremonies, they are also given ten rupees and fed ceremonial food.

Blacksmiths
Each Pahari village comprises one or two households of Kāmī blacksmiths. The houses and the workshops of these Nepali-speaking artisans are located at the periphery of the village, at a distance from the pure castes' houses. The Kāmī manufacture and maintain the various iron tools of the Pahari. Twice a year, they are given a share of their patron's harvest. The blacksmiths living in the Sikharpa region (Lele) all own some land.

Danuwar
In the beginning of winter, the Pahari call upon the Danuwar from Makwanpur District to perform a special ritual aimed at protecting their livestock against disease and wild beasts. This rite is called *pheri lāune* in Pahari and Nepali. Danuwar men conduct the rituals in the forest.[25] They are paid in cereal by all village households.

Conclusion
The Pahari social organisation described and analysed in this chapter belongs clearly to the Newar world. With a few exceptions, the old administrative structure, the lineage system and the kinship relationship terminology of the two communities are identical. In addition, the death associations of the Pahari and their cult of lineage deities are not significantly different from those of the Newar. However, some details concerning marriage ceremonies and certain features of the kinship system point to a specific sub-culture within Newar civilisation. Obviously, these elements help the Pahari maintain a conscious sense of their distinctive-

25 In the Tamang village of Temal (Kabrepalanchok District, near Dolalghat) Kamar ascetics (also called Jogi) conduct this ritual. This ceremony is carried out in order to ward off the evil spirits and to protect the villagers from dog bites. It is performed twice a year, in March-April and in October-November.

ness. This sub-culture presents some similarities, or at least some connections, with the customs and social order existing among the Balāmi, the Putuwār and even the Swāgumi of the village of Pyangaon.

In this respect, two similarities between the Pahari basket-makers and the Swāgumi bamboo box-makers (Chapter 4) need to be stressed. The first one concerns the terminological identification between, on the one hand, father's sister and mother's brother's wife, and, on the other hand, mother's brother and father's sister's husband. The second involves the possible original division of the group into two ritual and matrimonial moieties practising a direct and restricted exchange system.[26] These two features are characteristic of a cross-cousin marriage pattern. We can thus presume that some groups of the present Newar population observed such prescribed alliances in former times.[27]

Two other cultural features are worth mentioning before closing this chapter. These features, which parallel traits described in relation to the Balāmi, pertain to the religious sphere. The first concerns the sacred dances. Ceremonial choreographies are less central to the cultural life of the Pahari than they are within Balāmi settlements. However, the Pahari organise ritual dances several times a year, especially during the full moon of Kārtik (October-November), Mārga (November-December), and Caitra (March-April). The dances (Pah. *dyaḥ pikhiṃ)* are performed in several places within the village, starting from a main *dukuli* or *dabali* (a dance space, sometimes elevated) attached in most cases to a Devī goddess temple. They only include a small number of dancers. More often than not, these persons do not wear masks. Their faces are just coloured with paint.

The second feature relates to healing and spirit possession. Like the Balāmi, the Pahari summon local healers belonging to their own ethnic group in the event of disease caused by supernatural agents. These persons can be of two different types. The ordinary healer is called *mantar*. He feels the pulse of his patients to determine the cause of illness and uses only Tantric mantras to ward off the malevolence of dissatisfied spirits. But Paharis also call upon healers of a more shamanic type, called *baidye* (or *baide)*, who become

26 Interestingly, the Swāgumi lineage structure of Pyangaon also includes a division into 'duck-killers' and 'chicken-killers' in relation to the lineage deity. The Ācāḥ lineage members, for instance, sacrifice ducks, whereas Bu members sacrifice chicken (Toffin 1984: 79).

27 A thorough study of kinship terminologies and kin-group structures convinced Allen (1978) to argue that most Himalayan ethnic groups speaking Tibeto-Burman languages formerly practised bilateral cross-cousin marriage.

possessed and enter into a trance during their séance to determine what is required to cure the afflicted patient. Like their Balāmi counterparts, these intercessors do not wear any special costume and use a brass plate instead of the *dhyāṅgro*, a double-faced drum used by most of the Tibeto-Burman-speaking hill groups of the country. This plate is beaten with a wooden stick called a *locā* (Pah.). *Baidye* wear rosaries of *rudrākṣa* beads around their necks and have bells hung around their waists and shoulders. They are experts at expelling evil spirits from haunted houses (Pah. *chẽ chihigu*). Sometimes, the two different kinds of healing, with and without possession, are carried out by the same person.

Plate 21. Altar of Cundevī in Hompudol, April 2000. The deity is represented by aniconic stones [Chapter 7].

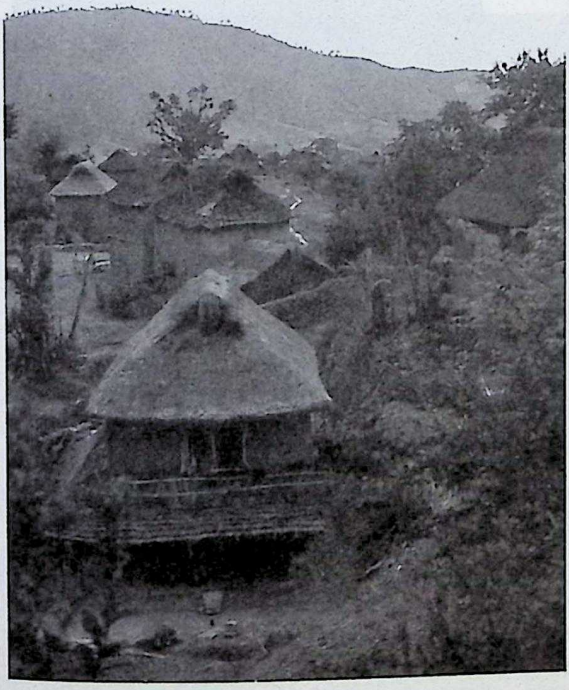


Plate 22. Sikharpa village, Lele Village Development Committee (Lalitpur District). This settlement is mainly occupied by Paharis, 1974 [Chapter 8].

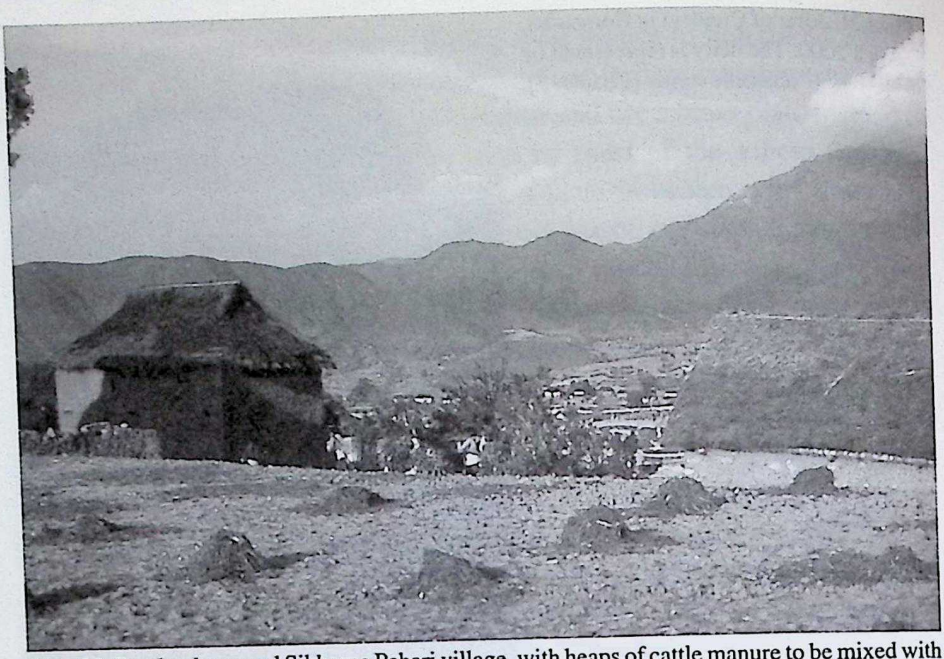


Plate 23. Dry lands around Sikharpa Pahari village, with heaps of cattle manure to be mixed with the soil, 1974 [Chapter 8].

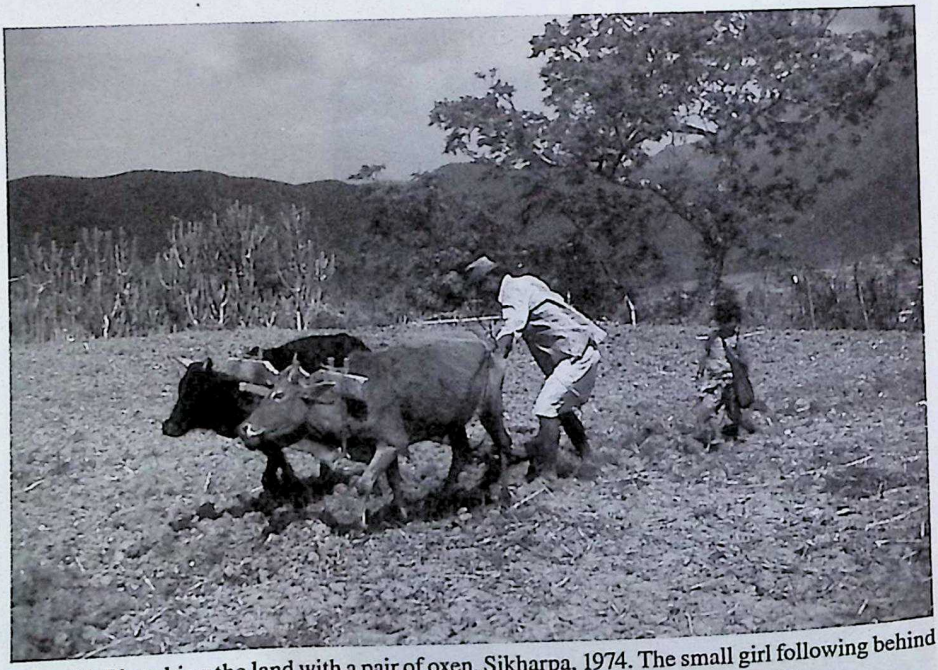


Plate 24. Ploughing the land with a pair of oxen, Sikharpa, 1974. The small girl following behind is sowing maize grains one by one into the freshly ploughed furrow [Chapter 8].

. Plate 25. A Paharī is manufacturing a *ḍoko* (Nep.) type of basket to be carried on one's back, Sikharpa, 1974. This basketwork is mainly used for sale or bartering [Chapter 8].

Plate 26. Gundabir Pahari, in whose house I lived at regular intervals between 1974 and 1976. Here, he is making a basket to store grains of rice [Chapter 8].

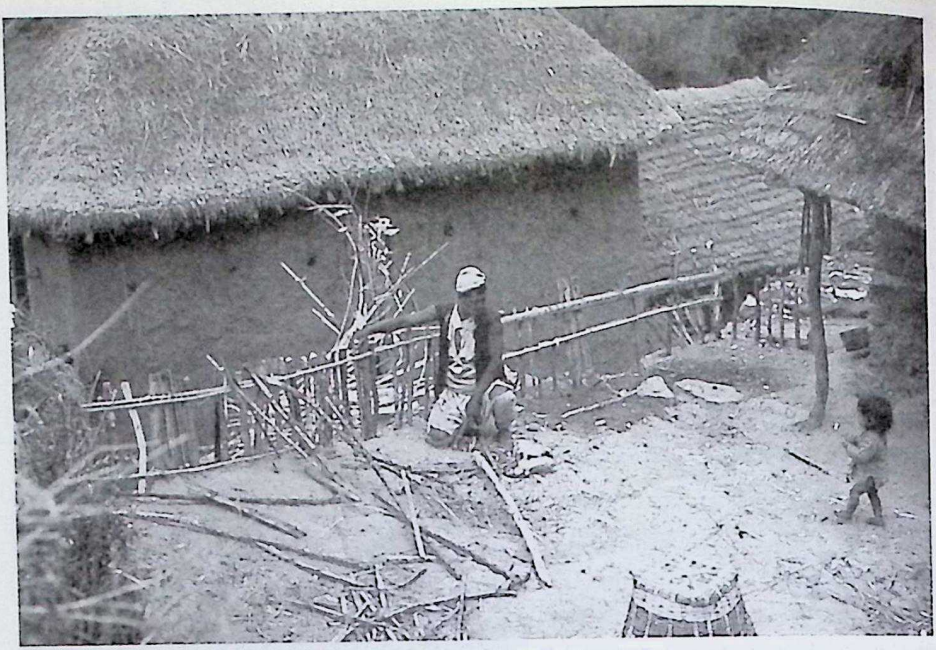


Plate 27. Courtyard of a Pahari house in Sikharpa, 1975 [Chapter 8].

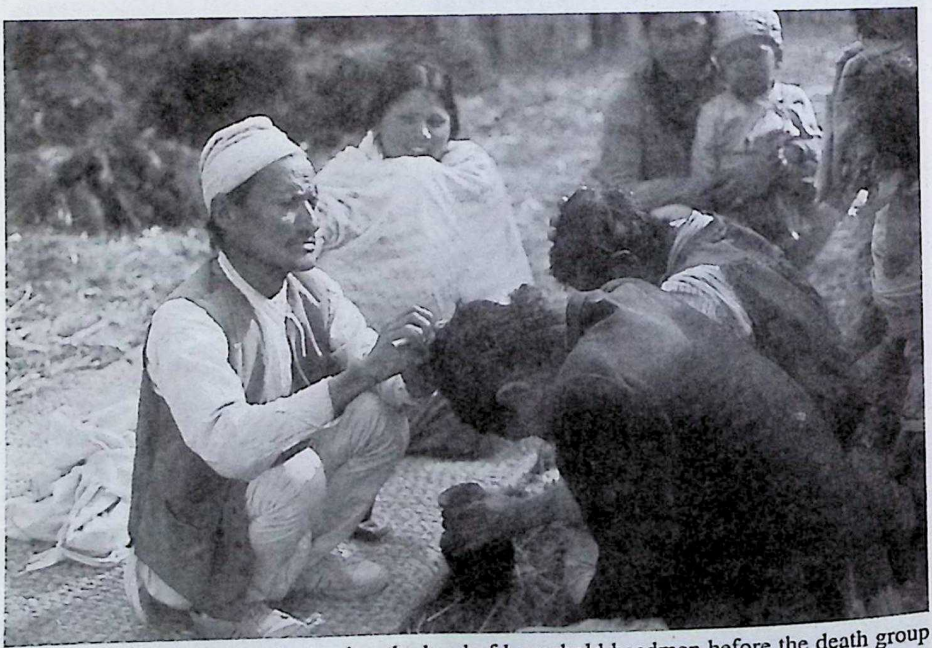


Plate 28. A Newar barber is shaving the head of household headmen before the death group celebration in winter. His wife is sitting next to him, Sikharpa, 1976 [Chapter 8].

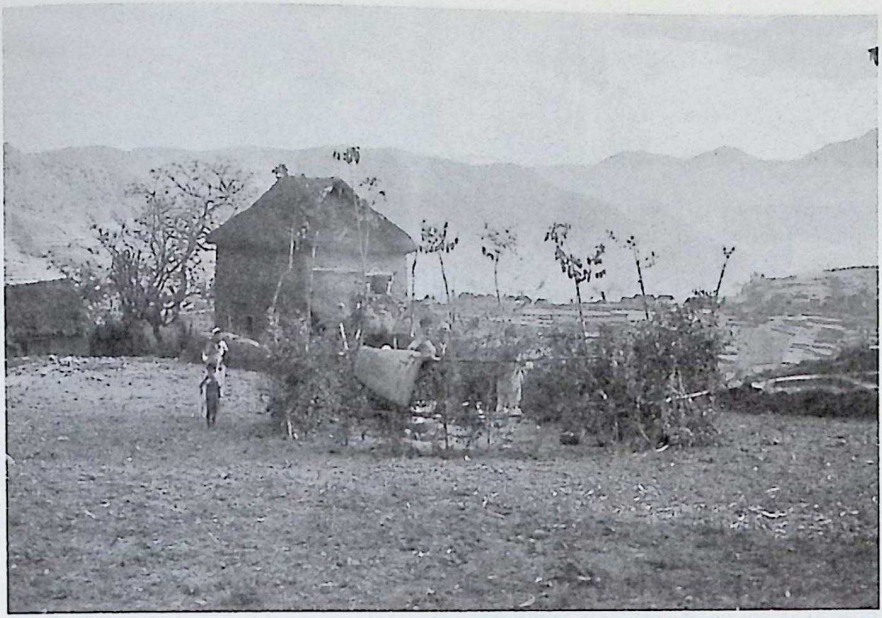


Plate 29. Ceremonial enclosure, *puilo* (Pah). in which the religious ceremonies of the Pahari death associations are performed once a year for three days in succession. The ceremonies start on the eve of the full moon of the Pauṣ lunar month. Each association (Pah. *pule gu)* used to built its own enclosure, Sikharpa, 1976 [Chapter 8].

Plate 30. The small town of Panauti, at the confluence of the Punyamati and Rosi Khola, Kabrepalanchok District, 1977 [Chapter 10].

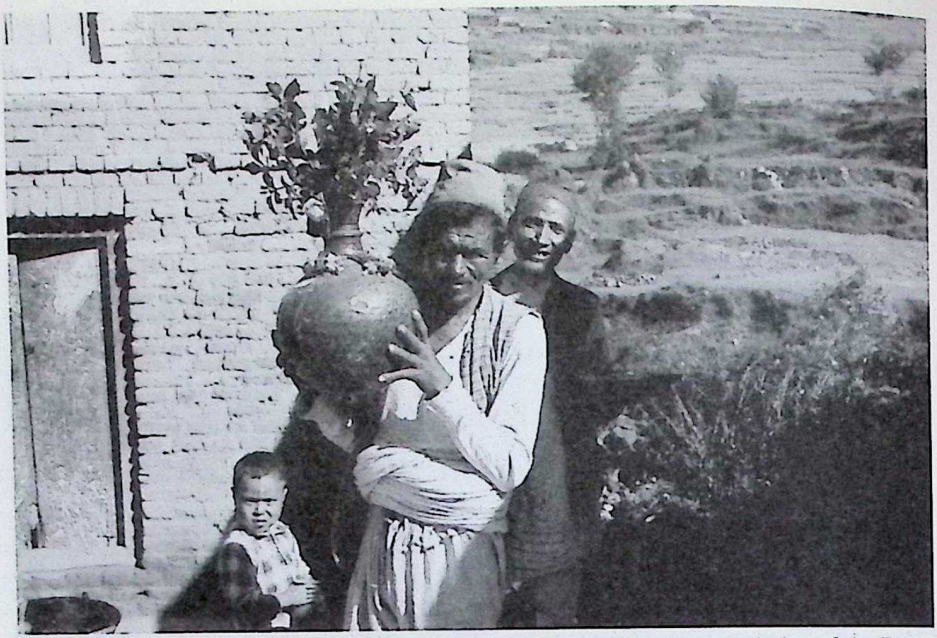


Plate 31. Arrival in Panauti of the *phulpāti* bundle of flowers on the seventh day of the Dasaĩ (Mwaḥni) festival, 1980. The flowers come from lower lands (Panchkal) and are carried by a Jaisī Bāhun. They symbolise the group of goddesses worshipped during this festival [Chapter 10].

Plate 32. Worship of weapons and daily implements on the ninth day, *nawamī*, of the Dasaĩ festival, Panauti, 1980 [Chapter 10].

Plate 33. A Newar butcher is dividing raw meat after slaughtering a buffalo during the Dasaĩ festival, Panauti, 1980 [Chapter 10].

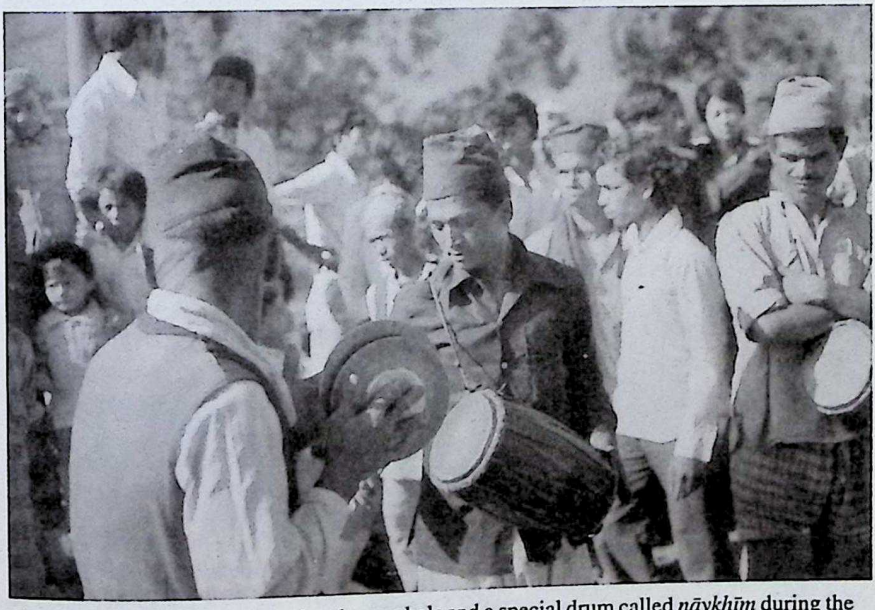


Plate 34. Newar butchers also play the cymbals and a special drum called *nāykhīṃ* during the various festivals of the locality, Panauti [Chapter 10].

Plate 35. A Karmācārya Tantric priest is drawing religious diagrams on the altar of Bhimdyaḥ (Bhimsen), Panauti, August 1976 [Chapter 10].

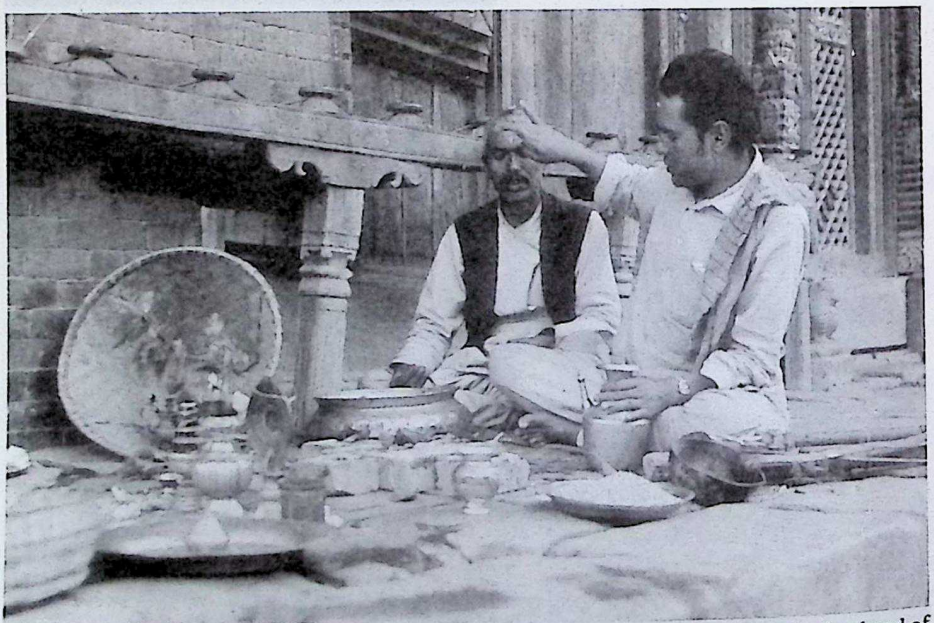


Plate 36. A Rājopadhyāya Brahmaṇ priest is applying a religious mark, *ṭikā*, on the forehead of the Karmācārya Tantric priest who is sitting just behind him. The ceremony performed is an offering to the sacred fire, *homa*, on the first day of Bhādra (August-September). It takes place in the precincts of the main shaivite temple of Panauti, Indreśvar Mahādev (1976) [Chapter 10].

Plate 37. A Prajāpatī man belonging to the Newar potter caste is preparing *piṇḍa* balls made of flour on the occasion of the memorial *śrāddha* (funeral ceremonies) performed in the name of his ancestors. Panauti, 1979. The ceremony is conducted by a 69 Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ [Chapter 11].

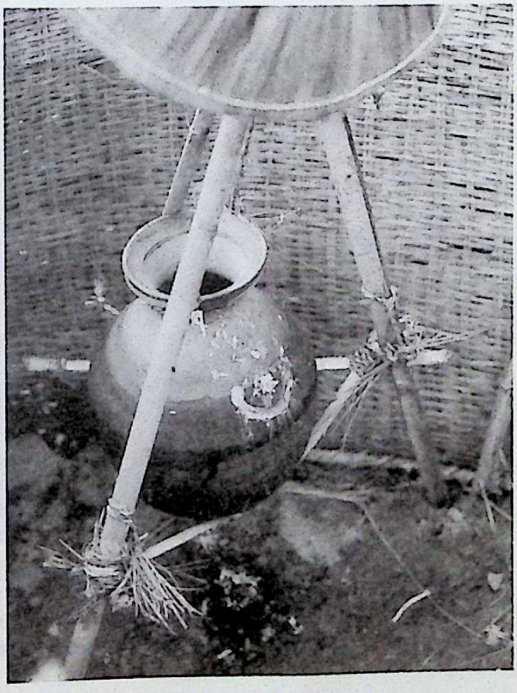


Plate 38. During the ten days following the cremation of a dead person, a pot full of water is hung over a *liṇga* made of clay on the bank of the nearest river. This *liṇga* is made by a member of the Bhāḷ caste. This ceremony is performed by most of the higher Hindu castes of Panauti [Chapter 11].

Plate 39. Two farmers from Indracok, Kathmandu, belonging to the Jyāpu caste, play *pwāgā* horns on the occasion of the Indra Jātrā festival (1970). These musical instruments, which require additional support, have no holes with which to control the musical tone. They are always played in pairs. This type of trumpet is smaller in length and diameter than the *kāhāḥ* (cf. Plate 18) [Chapter 12].

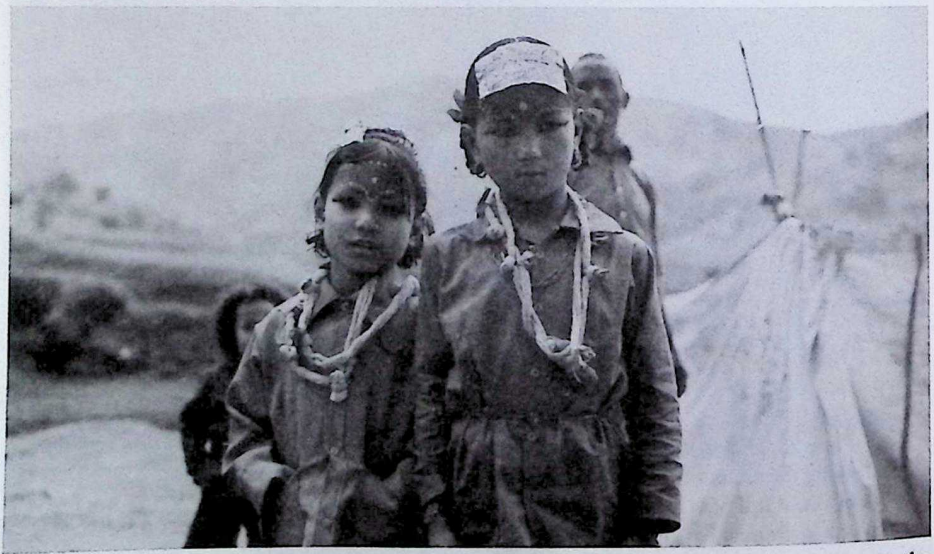


Plate 41. These two small girls from Panauti have undergone their *ihi* 'marriage' ceremony to the god Nārāyaṇ (or Kumāra) a few months back. They are now introduced to the lineage deity of their paternal family on the day of the *digudyaḥ pūjā*. One of them has a picture (painted by a Citrakār painter) of an altar dedicated to the sacred fire (New. *sāla khwāḥ*) tied to her forehead with a piece of string [Chapter 13].

From Kin to Caste

The role of *guthi* in Newar society and culture

I would like to express my gratitude to the Social Science Baha for doing me the honour of inviting me to deliver the Third Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture. Given the eminence of my predecessors, this is a more than ordinary privilege for me. The person we are remembering today was a historian who played a major role in the conservation, translation and analyses of Nepali written documents from the 18th and 19th centuries onwards. He was mainly interested in economic and social history. In particular, his series of books on the different land tenure systems that once existed in Nepal represents a remarkable achievement. In many ways, the subject I shall be speaking about in the present lecture, *guthi* (New.) among the Newar, complements his own historical study of religious endowments. The Newar *guthi*, a social institution that has its own specific characteristics, is not totally unconnected to the religious forms of ownership studied by Mahesh Chandra Regmi. Even if *guthi* in the Newar community can operate without any land, there is a sort of continuity between the two. This is one of the ideas that I intend to develop today.

This is the full text of the Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture 2005 delivered on 23 September, 2005, at the Russian Cultural Centre in Kathmandu, and published as *From Kin to Caste: The Role of* Guthi *in Newar Society and Culture*, Social Science Baha, 2005.

In Nepal as well as in India and many other countries all over the world, the observance of religious ceremonies and social customs has been ensured through special institutions more or less dependent upon the state. Nepali *guṭhī*, a word coming from the Sanskrit *goṣṭhī*, meaning an 'association' or an 'assembly', fall into this category.[1] In Nepal, as was demonstrated by the late Mahesh Chandra Regmi, this word designates endowments, mostly in the form of lands, and associations devoted to religious or philanthropic activities. The donors of these might be the king or members of the royal family, as well as private individuals. Gifts of money and land were made mainly to earn religious merit.

This situation is typical of non-secular states, where the government usually extends financial aid and other forms of patronage to religion. It was the duty of the king to promote religion, to build places of worship, and to bestow on them endowments in the form of money, jewels and lands. The management of the financial affairs of the temple was a normal part of the administration of the state. In many cases, the ruler himself controlled the form of the ceremonies performed in temple worship.

In Nepal, these religious investments have sometimes been diverted from their original purpose and used for other, essentially secular, functions: maintenance of irrigation channels, payments to military personnel, and provision for major expenses of the royal household, among others. But, on the whole, these types of lands and groupings have played, and still play to a certain extent, an important role in the development of religion and charitable institutions all over the kingdom. Historically, they have been instrumental in the establishment and maintenance of temples and monasteries, Hindu as well as Buddhist, *sattal* resthouses, bridges and roads, libraries and schools, wells and drinking water fountains, religious festivals of every kind, and the like.

It should be noted that *guṭhī* are found not only in the Kathmandu Valley and the middle hills of Nepal, but in the Tarai and in the Northern Himalayan regions as well. The oldest are clearly from *Nepālmaṇḍala*, that is, from the Kathmandu Valley. Elsewhere in Nepal, *guṭhī* are not attested to before the beginning of the 19th century.[2] Of course, the fact that no documents are available for the preceding period does not prove that this system was unknown earlier. In any case, such endowments

1 Classical Newar: *gvasti* (Cf. *A Dictionary of Classical Newari*, 2005: 88).

2 Regmi (1968, vol. 4: 3). It was only after 1800 that the *guṭhī* institution gradually proliferated to cover the entire country.

were a means for the state to protect religion and to guarantee a steady and regular supply of non-alienable funds for various activities. As a matter of fact, *guṭhī* landownership is characterised by permanent possession, a ban on alienation, particularly by a man's heirs, and tax exemption (Regmi 1976: 63). In spite of this irrevocable character, holdings of this sort have often been confiscated by the state for political reasons over the years.

Interestingly, Mahesh Chandra Regmi (1976: 43) stressed that the term *guṭhī* 'was originally used to denote an association of persons responsible for the management of religious and philanthropic endowments, not the endowments themselves'. It was applied to the lands endowed, rather than the body formed to supervise the functions, 'probably only after the Gorkhali conquest' (Ibid), that is, in a quite recent period. In another place (1968: 21), the same author suggests tracing 'the origin and growth of the *guṭhī* system as it exists at present in Nepal to the social and religious customs in the Newar community'. The prospect of demonstrating a historical link between the land endowment practices and the *guṭhī* system of the Newar, a unique feature of this ethnic group within Nepal,[3] is worth considering. More recently, Prayag Raj Sharma (2004: 64-6, 176-7) has proposed seeing the *guṭhī* recorded in the Licchavi inscriptions of the Kathmandu Valley as the ancestors of the present Newar *guthi* associations. He suggested an 'unbroken tradition continuing from the Licchavi Period [5th-9th century CE] down to the present'. I will discuss this hypothesis further on.

Newar *guthi* (also called *gū* in Newar) are of very different types. Some, for instance, are compulsory, others purely optional. Even among one category there is wide latitude for variations according to caste or locality. By and large, however, it is possible to distinguish three main types: first, *guthi* set up for the worship of a particular deity or the celebration of a festival; second, funeral associations; and third, territorial segments or ward groups, mainly linked with music, but also in some cases (among craftsmen) with workshops. *Guthi* attached to Buddhist *bāhāḥ* monasteries can be included in this last group, even if some of their features fall within the first. The first and last categories can be either multi-caste or mono-caste; the second type is always mono-caste.

3 Fisher (2001: 134) mentions the existence of *guthi* among the Thakali of the Upper Gandaki Valley. But among this ethnic group the word *guṭhī* just designates a lineage's common fund that is administered by a member of the clan, who lends the capital to clan members at a set rate of interest. There is nothing among the Thakali that resembles the Newar *guthi* associations.

Even though I shall not deal specifically with them here, three other mono-caste *guthi* are also worth mentioning: lineage *guthi* connected with the celebration of a patrilineage deity *(digudyaḥ guthi)*, secret dance societies *(dyaḥ pyākhā)* with a limited male membership that is strictly inherited,[4] and various caste associations. Most of these *guthi* are private associations. Only a few of them are recognised by the government and controlled by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān, an autonomous body that regulates all lands held under royal *guṭhī* tenure *(rāj guṭhī)* for taxation purposes and oversees the utilisation of the produce of these endowments. All these *guthi* societies are adapted to an urban environment, and/or to much more complex social structures than are usually found in Nepal, as we shall see later on. They are a feature of all Newars, Hindu as well as Buddhist, and of high caste and 'untouchable' alike.[5]

These associations are of tremendous importance in the traditional society and culture of the Kathmandu Valley.[6] Basically, they regulate several aspects of Newar social and religious life, and even possess economic functions in some limited cases. They are usually dissociated from kinship units, even if some of them are still anchored in kin groups. It might be contended that *guthi* until very recently were the ideal form of cooperation and social grouping among this people. They are vital for the status of an individual, and reinforce in many ways social relations within the community. They also emphasise cooperation in social life, even if dissension and competition often arise between members of the groups. In every Newar locality and caste, there is an extensive network of such associations. To take just one example, in the small town of Sankhu, located in the northeastern part of the Kathmandu Valley, more than 80 *guthi* associations specialising in a variety of religious activities, exclusive of funeral societies, are in active existence (Shrestha 2002: 161).

It is impossible to consider here in detail all the varieties and aspects of *guthi* among Newars. My intention is merely to put in evidence the main characteristics of such a system and to stress its place within the

4 On these secret dance societies, cf. Toffin (1996*d*). These are separate from all other *guthi*; but, by and large, they can be connected to the first type in charge of particular deities.

5 For funeral *guthi* among the Nāy butchers, an impure but 'touchable' caste according to the old Code, see recently Lie (1999: 115).

6 Most of the ethnographers have recognised the importance of *guthi* in Newar society. One curious exception is Robert Levy, who devoted only two pages to this institution in his monumental study of Bhaktapur, *Mesocosm* (1990).

wider social and cultural space of the indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley. My purpose is also to offer a more comparative approach, which can explain this institution. This is a point to which little attention has been paid until now, and so I will also comment on Asiatic as well as European parallels. As far as Nepal is concerned, I am interested in examining the links of the Newar *guthi* system with the land tenure of the same name that is widespread in the country and its interactions with Nepalis at large. This is the reason why I shall first discuss *guthi* that bear a closer resemblance to the ones that existed during Licchavi times or that currently continue to operate in the hill districts: that is, the multi-caste *guthi* for the cult of tutelary deities.

Multi-caste *guthi* for the cult of tutelary deities

The little Malla kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley were based symbolically on Tantric religious concepts and intimately associated with numerous deities. In particular, the capitals of these town-based Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms were centred on the royal palace *(lāykū)* and on protective divinities, in a similar manner to that found in many other little kingdoms of South Asia. Politics and religion were interconnected. The sovereignty of the king was expressed in ritual and religious terms. It corresponds to the 'mystical nature of the kingship' stressed by the British anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard in his 1948 Frazer lecture.[7] Kingship was clearly a governmental activity as well as a ritual office. In this model, the role of goddesses related to royalty was central. Taleju, Kumārī, Tripurasundarī and other Aṣṭa Mātṛkās (eight goddesses) and Ajimās (mother-goddesses) were and still are among these protectress deities. All these goddesses, imported from India, were used to legitimise the power of the king.

It has often been forgotten that the cult of these tutelary deities was, and still is, organised through complex multi-caste *guthi* that play a crucial role in the kingdom.[8] In Kathmandu, for instance, the Taleju and Kumārī *guthi* of the city is responsible not only for the daily cult of these two sovereign deities that are central for the king's power, but also for their various *parba* (festivals), Indra Jātrā and Mwaḥni (the Newar name of the Dasaī festival), for instance. The *guthi* includes 12 or so representatives of the Newar castes *(jāt)*, such as Maharjan, Khaḍgī,

7 Evans-Pritchard (1962 [1948]).

8 I make an honourable exception of Anne Vergati (1995: 106-10), who recognised this fact.

Karmācārya, Rajopādhyāyā, and even some Parbatiyās. It owns some holdings, and is funded mainly by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān. Membership is normally inherited within the family, from father to son.

This kind of association of people is remarkable for its multi-caste composition.[9] It reflects the traditional social order of the city, from the purest caste at the top of the hierarchy to the most impure one in the lowest rank. It is a concentrate of the whole of Newar society, and it is focused on the king and his personal deity. This couple, divine and human, located spatially in the centre of the city, at least symbolically, signify the pillar of the society around which all castes revolve. The king was held responsible for the well-being of the kingdom, an idea which has not totally disappeared today. Significantly, the members of this city-wide *guthi* are less often called *guthiyār* than *rakami*, a word derived from Persian, referring to the obligations of one person or one group towards the royal palace or an institution. These members are, in many ways, servants of the goddess, and are paid in cash or in food by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān.

In other words, the local caste hierarchy is directly related to the king and to the royally patronised divinities of the late Malla Period. Within the caste system, the prevailing hierarchy is established with special reference to the role played by the individual in the service of Taleju, the town's main political divinity and the family goddess of the ruler, who is said to have hailed from the former kingdom of Tirhut in North India. Taleju is not only the king's ally but also the source of his military power. Tantric and Brahmanic priests, astrologers, storekeepers, farmers (for cooking), gardeners (for the flowers), butchers (for the sacrifice), washermen, musicians, fishermen and sweepers[10] (for sweeping as well as for carrying out capital punishments), and so forth are all included and mobilised in her cult and in the *guthi* set up for the performance of her rites. The Taleju goddess constitutes one divine focus of the politico-ritual life of these kingdoms. The social order as a whole was (and still is today) determined, to no small degree, by men's and women's roles in the service and worship of the royal deity. The fulfilment of these ritual duties is as important as the religious obligations performed by the dif-

9 Other multi-caste *guthi*, of a private nature, also operate within Newar settlements. They are set up to play religious music or worship a specific local deity. These associations are voluntary. Lewis (1995: 51) has described a Buddhist multi-caste *guthi* in Kathmandu that is responsible for orchestrating the *Samyak* ceremony, held once every twelve years.

10 The Poḍe (Dyaḥlā) are the traditional fishermen and sweepers of the Newar.

ferent *jāt* towards the local dominant caste, whether Jyāpu, Śākya/Udās or Śreṣṭha. As I showed elsewhere (Toffin 1984), this model is much more reminiscent of the theory of the caste system developed by Arthur Maurice Hocart, the British scholar of the early decades of the 20th century, who focuses on the pivotal role of the king, than the ideas of Louis Dumont, the French anthropologist, who centred his theory more on the pure/impure opposition than on kingship. Obviously, the Newar caste system appears here as an elaborate religious division of labour (Chapter 11).

This kind of centrality in the role of the *guthi* responsible for serving the main protective deity of the locality is by no means peculiar to the present capital of Nepal. The same centrality can also be credited to the *guthi* of the Taleju goddess in Bhaktapur, which also includes representatives of the different castes of the city (Vergati 1995). The mediaeval Malla kings established all the rules of the *guthi* that is in charge of the service of this goddess in Bhaktapur, one of the former capitals of the Kathmandu Valley. Taleju also existed in Lalitpur, but, in this predominantly Buddhist city, the royal goddess is supplanted and outdone in importance by Matsyendranāth, one of the most syncretistic gods of Nepal; this deity is considered to be Karuṇāmaya-Avalokiteśvara by Buddhist Newars, and a Nātha ascetic and teacher of Gorakhnāth by Hindus. During the Malla Period, Matsyendranāth was related to the throne in a very powerful manner. The Matsyendranāth *guthi* funds all the ceremonies of this god, in whose Ta Bāhāḥ temple a branch office of the Guṭhī Saṃsthān is currently housed, and the main events of his two-month-long festival (to consider only the chariot procession) lasting from April to June. It can even be said that the religious life of the Newar farmer villages scattered all around Lalitpur District, which formerly formed part of the Lalitpur kingdom, is in great part focused on this god through various private *guthi*. A recent study of Sankhu also shows that nearly half the *guthi* of this small Newar town are directly or indirectly linked to the local Vajrayoginī deity (Shrestha 2002). This Tantric goddess plays a supreme role in the local social-religious life. The state, through the Guṭhī Saṃsthān, also finances a great part of her cult. It is thus not totally incorrect to see the Guṭhī Saṃsthān as a conservative instrument of the old hierarchical system, as modern commentators and activists insist on doing, an institution that would be essential to reform should any transformation of the society be considered necessary.

Such a symbolic organisation of the city, and the active part played

by the *guthi* in it, has a sacrificial and sacramental nature. In the greatest public festivals, such as Mwaḥni, which is associated with the royal palace and possesses strong kingly aspects, the whole body of the sacrificial animal (usually a buffalo) offered to the gods is divided and distributed among those with specified roles in the Taleju and Aṣṭa Māṭrkās rituals, in a way that reflects the caste hierarchy. Thus, the Brāhmaṇ and the purely Tantric Karmācārya priests each receive a thigh, whereas the tail, entrails and hooves go to the Khaḍgī butcher (Toffin 1981: 73). In Panauti, where I undertook a monographic study in the 1980s, this sacrifice and ritual division is financed by a multi-caste *guthi* operated by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān. Provision of *pūjā* materials and payment of ritual specialists, even at a minimal cost, is assured by this Corporation.

These forms of multi-caste associations uniting their efforts across caste boundaries were crucial for the religious cohesion of the little kingdoms of the Nepal Valley, and are still important today in many contexts. They do not differ structurally and functionally from the *guṭhī* organisations described elsewhere in Nepal. Let us, for instance, take the still-operational *guṭhī* associations that were funded in areas within the former *caubisi* kingdoms of Central Nepal, described by Marc Gaborieau (1977) and Philippe Ramirez (2000*a*: 99-100; 2000*b*). Their main functions are to finance the greatest annual festivals and to co-ordinate the duties of the various Parbatiyā (or Parbate) Hindu castes towards the divinities. All participants, from priests at the top to the lower castes who perform menial functions, are represented and participate in the rituals under the control of the local dominant caste. The Dasaĩ festival in homage to the goddesses in particular is still today a pre-eminent representation of the caste system and of the asymmetrical relationships between the ruler and his subjects. As among the Newar, the system is headed by a representative of the authorities at the local level. In this case, too, we are tempted to see, with Hocart, the origin of the state organisation in the co-ordination of such elaborate rituals, which man establishes to ensure prosperity and harmony.

Death associations

Funeral *guthi* are a distinctive feature of the Newar (see Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6). These mutual associations, in which the members lend assistance to each other for the cremation of *guthi* members, do not exist among Parbatiyā Hindu castes or other Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnic groups of Nepal. We are entering here a new social world, totally different from

the multi-caste associations discussed earlier, an inner Newar world where caste relationships are almost irrelevant and where society operates through other specific rules. One most important difference is that this type of grouping rests on the principle of equality among all members, tempered only by respect for seniority. As a matter of fact, the opposition within such groups between the juniors, *kwaḥkāli*, and the elders, *thakāli*, is a pervasive one and a fundamental principle of internal hierarchy. Traditionally, *thakāli* seniors are much revered in Newar society. They wear a distinct white turban on the head, a mark of chieftainship all over Nepal, and are held in respect. They are even deified or equated with gods through special honorific ceremonies. One other noticeable difference with the previous type of association is that death *guthi* usually lack land endowments. They very rarely have bank deposits or receive rents from buildings. All members, called *guthiyār*, have to make an annual or bi-annual contribution to meet the running expenses. The management of the association is the responsibility of a specified member or members and this revolves each year. The rotation of the responsibility for organising feasts and rituals reinforces the ties of solidarity and dependence within the group. These regulations are an expression of the intra-caste solidarity and unity among the Newar.

Death *guthi*, called *sī guthi* and/or *sanāḥ guthi*[11] in Newar, are socio-religious organisations of people of the same caste and more frequently of people belonging to the same locality. Traditionally, these associations, which are the most important *guthi* in Newar society, are compulsory; all heads of households *(thakāli)* are obliged to belong to a funeral group in order to claim full status within Newar society. The rest of their families will then be automatically granted the services of the *guthi*. Membership is hereditary: it passes from father to son. It thus appears to be impossible for a person to change *guthi*. In practice, however, this obstacle may be overcome when a change of residence takes place or a dispute happens within the group. To become accepted into a new group, the newcomer has to pay a high fee. In many cases, this is a strong financial deterrent to changing membership of a *guthi*. A new affiliation is also sought, often successfully, if one marries a woman from a different caste. Shifting from one death society to another is more frequent in cities than in villages. Consequently, a close correspondence exists in rural areas between kin units and *sī guthi*. Yet, when a division occurs

11 Most probably from Sanskrit *snāna*, ritual bath.

within a patrilineage, the split kin groups often attach themselves to different funeral groups. This is the reason why marriage within funeral associations is permitted, as long as it falls outside lineage *(kawāḥ* or *phuki)* relationships.

The main function of death associations is to dispose off dead bodies at the cremation ground when a death occurs in the house of one of the *guthiyār*. Members express mutual support. They carry the corpse up to the river and participate in the funeral procession. Along with the main mourner, the *guthiyār* perform the last rites and pay their final respects to the dead person. Some of them will be in charge of cremating the corpse. Very often, this obligation is rotated annually among the *guthiyār*. A few days later, all the *guthi* members will convey their condolences, *bicāḥ wanegu,* to the bereaved family. Normally, the group possesses a shroud, called *dewā* in Newar, which is stored during normal times in the house of the head of the group, and is draped on the corpse for some period of time before the cremation.

But funeral associations have important social functions as well. Each *sī guthi* has its senior members and an organising committee, who police social regulations within the community and act as a vehicle for moral values. Fines are levied if a member fails to pay his annual fees, or fails to fulfil his functions. The ultimate penalty is exclusion from the *guthi*, a sanction that is exercised when a member marries a woman from a lower caste or cohabits with an 'untouchable' woman. This exclusion (New. *pi cuyegu)* is equivalent to excommunication from the caste. A person afflicted with leprosy will also be barred from the association.

Death ceremonies involve the participation of many ritual specialists—barbers, musicians, various priests, and the like. The *Padmagiri* chronicle records that representatives of the 'thirty-six castes', i.e., all the castes of the hierarchy, should accompany the corpse of the king to the cremation ground (Hasrat 1971). Today, high-caste Hindu funerals come closest to imitating this maximal elaboration of specialist roles at death. In the numerous villages dominated by Maharjan agriculturists, the farmers themselves act as patrons. They call on the service of ritual specialists situated at lower ranks in the caste hierarchy—barbers, butchers, gardeners, and so on. Whatever the offices performed, these specialists are paid by the dead person's household. Significantly, the death *guthi* as a unit employs no ritual specialists from other castes. Everything is kept within the local caste group. Likewise, *guthi* funds are not used to pay for funeral expenses (except for the wood for cremation, the

provision of which, in the past, was part of the responsibility of the death association), which must be borne by the household. The *guthiyār* are present to help and demonstrate their solidarity.

Each *sī guthi* celebrates its own annual feast. In the past, some of them met twice a year, but this is no longer the case today. These feasts are held over two or three days, and include numerous meals. Buffaloes are sacrificed and their meat eaten by the *guthiyār*. All the members must participate in the gathering. Fines are levied on *guthiyār* who are absent. Annual fees are collected, and the accounts of the association examined. The patron god of the *guthi*, in most cases Bhairava (Bhailaḥdyaḥ in Newar), is worshipped by all the members and transferred to the house of the following year's presiding office-holder. In some cases, however, this god is stored year after year in the house of the *thakāli* of the group. Among Maharjan farmers, these feasts are held in special buildings, *guthi chẽ*, belonging to the association. Very often, a straw hut is erected temporarily. In other cases, thatched screens are placed around the feasting place to keep the event private (Chapter 6).

Death *guthi* feasts take place in a sacramental atmosphere that is reminiscent of the cult of the tutelary deities operated by the multi-caste *guthi* examined just now. This is particularly the case with the *sī kāḥ bhway* (or *mū bhway)*, a special feast that takes place at the end of the festivities, usually in the late evening. It is restricted to the eight oldest male members of the association, collectively called the *thakāli*. During the ceremonial feast, the head of the sacrificed animal is shared among these eight persons according to seniority, and eaten along with flattened rice *(baji)* and beer *(thwaṃ)*. The oldest is entitled to the right eye of the animal. The tongue, which is considered to be the finest and most honorific piece, is handed to the incoming presiding member to oblige him to conduct his period of office competently and successfully during the coming year. Women are totally excluded from these rituals. As a matter of fact, *sī guthi* are organised on the basis of a far-reaching segregation of the sexes in social activities (Chapter 13).

Death associations are permeated with Hindu (and sometimes Buddhist) concepts: the impurity of the corpse, the passage of the dead person from the state of a dangerous *preta* ('hungry ghost') to the condition of a benevolent ancestor, *pitṛ*, a general sense of caste hierarchy and a deep concern with pollution. All these are purely Indic notions that have been adopted by Newars in the course of history. Nevertheless, other Hindu groups or castes in Nepal did not feel the need to form death

associations. Therefore, the establishment of funeral associations cannot be explained simply by religious or cultural factors. Social features must be preponderant. I have no explanation to offer for the singularity of the phenomenon, but I would like to suggest one hypothesis that has something to do with the character of kinship units among the Newar. This population does not have clans like the Gurung or Tamang ethnic groups, and its patrilineages are characterised by their shallowness, except among the high Hindu castes. By and large, kinship genealogical links between agnates are usually forgotten as soon as the fourth or the fifth generation is reached (Chapters 4 and 6). Therefore, the dead lose their social identity in quite a rapid manner. A split in the lineage often marks the appearance of two different social and ritual groupings. Consequently, marriage alliances are contracted at a close degree of relatedness between relatives. We can thus conjecture that death *guthi*, in the absence of corporate and deep lineages or clans, satisfy the need to have large groupings to promote solidarity with local communities.

What I am suggesting is that the process of Sanskritisation evoked by Prayag Raj Sharma to link the present Newar social organisation with the ancient Licchavi Period cannot explain entirely how the society of the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley has been formed. Canonical Hindu ideas have also clearly undergone a process of progressive indigenisation before their final assimilation. They have been recast into an autochthonous, most probably a tribal, social environment. The *sī guthi* system has to be seen in this light, as the conjunction of Hindu ideas and an older social order. Like many other populations of Nepal, the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley lay in a frontier zone between Tibeto-Burmese and Indic peoples and cultures. I must admit that it is difficult to reconstruct such an ancient social organisation and to elucidate the historical and sociological constraints that produced it. It is also quite problematic to isolate such a hypothetical system from other elements with which it may have become mixed up in the course of history. Especially in Nepal, the Parbatiyā (hill) Hindus have lived in close contact with the Tibeto-Burmese groups for a long time. Mutual interactions and intimate relationships between the two took place over the course of centuries. As a matter of fact, the tribe/caste dichotomy belongs merely to the realm of ideal-typical types, and has to be handled with caution. But a comparative study clearly shows that this older indigenous system of *sī guthi* accords greater value to soil than to blood relationships and focuses more on death than on marriage, in contrast with the North In-

dian rule followed by the Parbatiyās (Toffin 1984). To be exact, *guthi* rituals and gatherings place their emphasis on locality and on death.[12]

Guthi attached to territorial segments

It is now time to take a closer look at the links between *guthi* and territory. In an article published in 1956, the late Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf drew attention to the social organisation of the Mānandhar caste (New. Sāymi), i.e., the Newar oil-pressers. Interestingly, Mānandhars of the old Kathmandu city were traditionally divided among nine social units, each centred at one locality. The saying *Guṃgu twāḥlay Nhay sāḥ Sāymi*, 'Seven hundred Sāymis in nine quarters, *ṭol*', is still remembered today in Kathmandu. The nine ancestral localities were: Nhu Sah (Jhochen), Dai Sah (Gwa Simuga Galli), Phalcha and Kotha Sah, Chasanda (Maruhity and Bautahiti), Thāhiti, Tau-Lami (Tau Lachi), Layku Sah, Pukhudyā (Pako Poka), and Wotu. In most cases, the name refers to a specific locality. Some of these are known to be more recent offshoots from the older ones.[13] These spatial units, called *sāḥ* in Newar, were the fundamental elements of their social organisation. They were divided among lineages descended from one male ancestor. These *sāḥ* territorial segments were each headed by a *thakāli*, i.e., its oldest male member, for all honorific and ceremonial purposes, and by a *kaji* for all practical matters. Mānandhars who left the Valley could remain members of their *sāḥ* territorial segments provided they returned periodically to Kathmandu to participate in the main feasts.

The households of these '700 oil-pressers' taken together formed a local caste-council, called *shingu guṭhī*, which held a feast every year in Swayambhū, five days after the full moon of the month of Phālgun (February-March), Phāgu Punhī. The seven groups each contributed a certain type of food or service for this communal feast. Thāhiti, for instance, made rice-beer available, Wotu provided flattened rice, Nhu Sah was responsible for the purchase and the cutting up of the meat, and so on. A Buddhist Vajrācārya priest was called to make offerings to the gods. This communal *guthi* was entitled to expel Mānandhars guilty of inter-caste marriage. As is well known, the joint preparation and consumption of meals preceded

12 'Urāy (Buddhist trader caste) traditions are intricately organised around death' (Lewis 1995: 56). See also Bert van den Hoek and B.G. Shrestha (1992).

13 It is said that originally there were only seven of these units, each corresponding to one oil-press. I myself conducted a survey with Krishna Prasad Rimal on this subject during the early 1980s.

by an act of worship is one of the principal means of enforcing the solidarity of a social group among the Newar.

The nine localities were also centred in the neighbourhood of one of several collectively owned oil-press workshops, similarly called *sāḥ*[14] or *cikā sāḥ* in Newar. These workshops each consisted of 24 members, each taking on the duty of the oil-presser for 24 hours, turn by turn. They were organised through the *guthi* system, and were called *guthi sāḥ* or *mākāḥ guthi*. The twenty-four *guthiyār* were regular participants in feasts, *guthi bhway*. The Layku Sah, for instance, meets seven times a year, on religious dates such as Mwaḥni, Māgh Punhī, Rām Navamī, Sithi Nakhaḥ, Gathāmugaḥ, and the like. Each of these *sāḥ* have some duties during the important festivals of Kathmandu—for instance, the erection of ceremonial poles *(yaḥsī* during Indra Jātrā, *cir* during the full moon of Phālgun) and the making of ropes to pull the god's carts. They also have to supply food and oil to the gods and the festival organising committee. Every month, they provide a bamboo container filled with oil for the royal goddess Taleju. This complex and highly constrained system has today entirely disappeared owing to internal quarrels and the appearance, in the 1970s, of individually owned *sāḥ* workshops replacing the old collective ones.

The social organisation of the Maharjan (or Jyāpu) farmers of Kathmandu also expresses the crucial role of territorial bonds among the Newar. As I documented in an earlier study (Toffin 1994), this local caste group is divided among 32 named quarters, *twāḥ* in Newar, which are distributed among the three traditional parts of the historic city: the upper town, *Thaḥne*; the middle town, *Dathu*, around the palace; and the lower town, *Kwaḥne*. It seems that this old division was linked in the past to the military defence of the town. As a matter of fact, during the mediaeval period, the Maharjan were enrolled in the military forces of the town and attached to the main gates of the city, which they had to defend.

These 32 units, called *twāḥ guthi*, 'the association of the quarter', in Newar, correspond to distinct Maharjan social groupings consisting of the farmers of the neighbourhood (Chapter 3). Each association has a common territory and common protective gods. Their male members, *guthiyār*, are all designated by the same name, derived from the name of the corresponding quarter. They have their own identity and must marry

14 *Sāḥ* is probably a corruption of Sanskrit *śālā*, shed, house, workshop. Cf. Sharma (2004: 65).

outside their group. Interestingly, they all worship the same local indigenous god of music, Nāsaḥdyaḥ, a form of Śiva (Nṛtināth). The cult of this deity is a pivotal one in the grouping, and reinforces the unity of its members. An altar of Nāsaḥdyaḥ is found in each of the 32 quarters. It is often considered the *kuldyaḥ* or *āgādyaḥ*, the lineage and secret deity of the quarter and the association.

Moreover, all *guthi* members participate in a musical group based on an apprenticeship in the playing of a special cylindrical drum, exclusive to the Newars, the *dhimay*, and the playing of this membranophone during religious ceremonies. All the male members in the neighbourhood must belong to this association, called the *dhimay guthi*. The *dhimay* drum is considered a sacred instrument, and women are debarred from touching it. It is even considered an embodiment of the Nāsaḥdyaḥ god. Affiliation to the association is hereditary, and follows the agnatic line. A man never has the opportunity to change his *twāḥ* during his lifetime, and will remain attached to his local *guthi* even if he moves to the suburbs of Kathmandu. Today, some of these territorial segments have disappeared, and some others have split. But the overall structure remains active and functions on the same musical and religious lines as before.

These territorial associations also exist among the Newar farmers of Lalitpur. In this locality, the Maharjan are divided traditionally among 44 quarters, *twāḥ*, out of which 40 are still operating today. Each possesses a shrine devoted to Nāsaḥdyaḥ and another one dedicated to Ganedyaḥ (Gaṇeśa). But in Lalitpur, the territorial segments, locally known by the name of *mākāḥ guthi* (from *mākāḥ*: 'common'), are connected to the *dhimay* drum in a more loose manner than in Kathmandu, and do not form an exogamous group. The members of the same *guthi* can marry among themselves if they are not able to trace consanguineal bonds to a common ancestor. Normally, a gap of seven generations has to be observed on the agnatic side and five on the uterine side before a marriage can take place; but very often, as soon as kin links are forgotten, marriage is authorised. As in Kathmandu, every Maharjan quarter has its own music house, *mākāḥ chẽ*, the 'common house', for apprenticeship and rehearsal.

Multi-purpose *guthi* associations

To complete my picture of *guthi*, I would like to stress another aspect of the system, active only among certain Newar groups: its multifunctionality. This facet, which has not yet been described in the literature, concerns

only those associations of which membership is compulsory. Let us consider, for instance, a local Balāmi *guthi* configuration. Balāmis are a small group living on the edges of the Kathmandu Valley and in the adjacent valleys to the south and to the west (Chapter 7). They formerly specialised in cutting and selling wood, but currently are mainly agriculturalists. They speak a dialect of Newar and share a great part of the Newar culture. In the village of Phulchok, a few minutes' walk from Pharping, all male Balāmis of the settlement must belong to an association that is in charge of most of the religious activities of the group. The *guthiyār*, currently numbering 65, meet six times a year: at Guni Punhī, Thīlā Punhī (the local name for Yaḥmari Punhī), Māgh Saṅkrānti, Śrī Pañcamī, Phāgu Punhī and Sithi Nakhaḥ. These religious events are the major annual occasions for village gatherings, and the corresponding rites a prerequisite for preserving the village's year-round welfare. On some of these occasions, dances, an important part of Balāmi culture, are performed and exhibited in different wards of Pharping. Small loans, with fixed interest rates, are concluded every year between the members during these meetings. The local association thus provides a wide framework for general mutual support and continuous interaction between the villagers.

At every meeting, a feast, *guthi bhway*, is held in a special house collectively owned by the group. All members must be present. Members absent without a reasonable excuse are fined by the current office-holder of the group. A ceremonial meal, consisting of the sharing of the head of the animal sacrificed, *sī kāḥ bhway*, is taken by the oldest persons, the *thakāli*, at the end of each of these occasions. Interestingly, this *guthi* also functions as a funeral association, *sanāḥ guthi*. Its members have to participate in the funeral processions of all the male members and other members of their families. Moreover, *thakāli* seniors are entitled to expel a member in cases of bad behaviour, robbery or other misconduct. As elsewhere, marriage is allowed within the local society if the contracting persons are not closely related.

A quite similar pattern, but with its own specific features, prevails in Pyangaon village (in Lalitpur District), where I undertook my first fieldwork in my early days in Nepal (1970-3). This Newar mono-caste locality is inhabited by a sub-caste, called Swāgumi or Gāmo, of a slightly lower status than the Maharjan, but still more or less attached to this large farmer caste. The village is almost entirely endogamous. Its inhabitants speak a Newar dialect that is difficult to follow, but not totally

incomprehensible, for a Newar from Lalitpur. The population (about 900 persons in 2001) is divided among five exogamous lineages, called *gwahā*, but also known by the term *guthi*. Four are 'Hindus', *śivarmārgi*, and employ a Brāhmaṇ priest while the fifth is 'Buddhist', *buddhamārgi*, and they call on a Vajrācārya Buddhist priest for their main domestic rites. The two groups, *śivamārgis* and *buddhamārgis,* come originally from distinct places, located south of Lele village, not far from the Mahabharat range. They can, of course, intermarry (Chapter 4).

As within the Balāmi village of Phulchok, these *guthi* groups regulate the social life of the village and serve as death associations. The four 'Hindu' *guthi* meet separately on every fourteenth day of the dark fortnight *(caturdaśī* or *caḥray)* to share a ceremonial meal in a common house called *guthi chẽ.* Sacrifices of animals and a feast of an animal head (the *sī kāḥ bhway* division, locally known by the expression *karā swigu)* take place on each occasion. These multi-purpose and compulsory lineage 'associations' operate the main local festivals, especially that of Nikuncā Mahādyaḥ during Indra Jātrā (the full moon of the month of Bhādra), the winter pilgrimage to Kāleśvar Mahādev (south of Lele), and other offerings to different deities that ensure the prosperity of the community. They provide a definitive corporate character to the activities of the locality. Interestingly, in this village, the kinship units correspond to the division into *guthi.* We are here in the presence of an archaic form of *guthi* association, closely connected to the patrilineage structure. These five groups, made up of the male heads of the settlement's households, are thus the basis for the performance of the cult of the lineage deity. The small size of the village probably explains, at least partly, such a merging of functions. Since 1950 (Bikram Sambat 2007), the five *guthi* of the village have each split into two, as a result of an internal quarrel.

In other Maharjan settlements located in Lalitpur District, the funeral *guthi* form large groupings made up of different patrilineages *(kawāḥ),* often unconnected to each other, following the model described earlier. In these localities, death groupings are not only in charge of funerals and cremations of their members, but are also linked to the celebration of the local protecting deity. The cult of such a deity, more often than not a goddess, is organised and has its functions sub-divided mainly on the basis of the farmers' funeral groups (Chapter 6). In other words, these multifarious associations are the keystone of the village structure. Here, as elsewhere, territory is the predominant factor. Even if they are not

totally isolable wholes, these Newar villages can be studied as systems of their own, in contrast to what happens in most parts of India and among the Nepali Parbatiyā castes.

In Theco village, for instance, the four funeral *guthi* of the upper part of the locality each have a special duty towards the Bālkumārī goddess presiding over the welfare of this part of the village. The first death *guthi* offers cooked rice to the goddess every month on the eve of the full moon. The second offers rice-beer on every full-moon day. The third one presents rice, vermilion paste, incense and flowers on the first day of the lunar month. The last one takes responsibility for the cult of the fierce Bhairava god attached to the goddess and which is located in the upper part of the village. The tasks of watching over the temple, guarding the statues and cleaning the roofs rotate among the members according to an internal age-set division. Moreover, the festival of the goddess, which is held during the full moon of Mārga (November-December), and which represents the main festival, *deś jātrā*, of Theco village, is organised through these funeral groups. Not surprisingly, affiliation to these *guthi* is compulsory, and is inherited strictly from father to son. It is nearly impossible to change from one *guthi* to another during one's lifetime. They have an ascriptive component.

An anthropological approach

I have already stressed the great diversity of these associations with respect to their sociological characteristics: compulsory/optional, inherited/voluntary, and mono-caste/multi-caste. In this respect, two very different sets of *guthi* have been examined in the preceding pages. The first one is linked to the caste system, the kingly order over the city; it reproduces a hierarchical order derived from classical India, and is centred on a sovereign seen at the same time as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, the zealous devotee of Paśupatināth, and an intimate partner of personal tutelary goddesses. The second form of *guthi* has to do with the world within the caste; it enhances other social functions, related to death inside local or kin-bounded communities, economic co-operation and territorial bonds. It stands in sharp contrast to the first one.

These two sides of the *guthi* system are not mutually exclusive, however. The Valley of Nepal has been in close communication with India for two millennia, with periods of intense exchanges and a continuous migration of population. It has been a land of refuge for Buddhist monks during the 12th and 13th centuries and for Hindu castes at various other

periods of time. Interactions between the more Indianised political and religious centres and the peripheral small towns and villages have been important in all periods. As I have argued elsewhere (Toffin 1984), the caste system has been penetrating the indigenous communities of the Kathmandu Valley from a very early date, and its influence was reinforced in the post-Malla Period. Hindu kings, for their part, have ruled over the population of the Malla city-states since the early mediaeval period and exerted their influence everywhere, even if Newar settlements have been able to retain their autonomy in various sectors.

Nonetheless, compared with India, Newar society obviously displays two distinctive traits: the importance of territorial bonds and the strength of mono-caste organisations not wholly connected with kinship. These elements, which are not unknown to Indian sociology, are associated in a more constant manner with the tribal world than with the universe of the caste. *Guthi* have unmistakably been borrowed from India since Licchavi times, but they have been reshaped and reformatted, at least partly, in local terms to adjust to a different social structure. Newar society cannot be explained in terms of the caste system alone. Therefore, the theory of Louis Dumont about caste organisation and hierarchy as a whole, embracing all aspects of social life, does not hold for this ethnic group. Among the Newar, as probably in most parts of India itself, caste does not encompass the whole of social life.

Interestingly, such a feature has not prevented Newar associations from influencing Parbatiyā Hindu castes, to the point of having been adopted by them. Some decades ago, Khem Bahadur Bista conjectured that the *dewālī pūjā*s of the Bāhun and Chetrī groups underwent important interactions with the Newar *digudyaḥ guthi* (1972: 130). The similarities between the two cults are so striking that the hypothesis is worth considering. And another Nepali anthropologist has recently reported that Parbatiyās around Sankhu in the Kathmandu Valley have now begun to adopt the custom of establishing death *guthi* for assisting and attending the funerals of their caste-fellows (Shrestha 2002: 157). Obviously, such unnoticed interactions between Newars and Parbatiyās have not been limited to these two examples, and extend to many other fields, all of which would be worth investigating.

The proliferation of *guthi* associations within the social fabric of Newar society is obviously one of the main characteristics of the traditional culture of the Kathmandu Valley. A Newar man may belong simultaneously to six, seven, and sometimes to even more associations. He can be

a member at the same time of a death society, a *guthi* for a lineage deity, a neighbourhood association, a *guthi* set up for devotions to Bhimsen, a caste *guthi*, and so on. He will, therefore, belong to six or more different networks of persons, including kin, caste-mates, neighbours of the same caste, and fellows belonging to other castes. For each of these associations, he will participate in various feasts every year, contributing in money or in kind, taking his turn in each of them, following the specific regulations of the various groups. These circles of individuals and networks, each one intersecting with the others, form a structure that regulates the rights and obligations held by each person as well as the mechanisms by which they are enforced. Such a vitality of associative life is a clear sign of the importance of sociability among Newars. It is also an indication of the strength of the social bonds among this population and of the low value conferred on the individual, on the isolate person cut off from all networks. Admittedly these meetings are not always harmonious, and quarrels often occur. But even the disputes that erupt during feasts when too much rice-beer or alcohol has been drunk or at the time of the inspection of the account books, can be, once settled, a factor of socialisation and an element of cohesion.

The complexity of such groups, which are at once linked to residence, kinship and caste, is worth stressing. The link with territory in particular has to be underlined. Most authors, the majority of them being anthropologists, have insisted on the importance of locality in this system. Obviously, *guthi* organisation is based, in most cases, on geographical propinquity and possesses a strong local rootedness. We are touching here on a general feature of Newar society and culture: the predominance of territory over kinship. As was demonstrated above, kinship ties quickly disappear after some generations and are replaced or expanded by bonds based on soil and residence. The absence of any extended structure of unilineal descent groups is itself a significant factor in the explanation of this pattern of kin-and-territory local organisation. The introversion of Newar society, attached to locally bounded institutions and edifices, practising high rates of territorial endogamy (especially among Maharjan farmers), even within large cities like Kathmandu or Lalitpur, and composed of a great number of mono-caste farmer villages, is a distinctive feature of this society, quite in contrast to the general pattern among the Parbatiyā Hindu castes. We may wonder whether the capture of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-9 and the subjugation of the Newar by a conquering group belonging to a different culture may

not have accentuated this phenomenon. What I am suggesting here is that the Newar may have reacted to the unification of Nepal and to their political defeat by retiring within their institutions, limiting their contacts with their immediate neighbourhood. A society like that of the Kathmandu Valley, exposed to migrations and political change for more than two millennia, cannot be envisaged as having survived without having undergone important modifications in its structure over the course of time. It has had too eventful a history not to have seen such changes.

Towards a comparative perspective

These ties based on territory are reminiscent of elements of the Tibetan social structure. Pascale Dollfus (1989: 161-2) has described ward associations in Ladakh, named *bcu-cho*, that fulfil religious functions, such as reading sacred books, ceremonial circumambulations around the locality, or organising the New Year Festival by rotation. As among Newar *guthi*, members who move from one ward to another remain affiliated to their original *bcu-cho*. Further, mutual aid associations called *kidu*, set up for religious or economic purposes, are well known in Tibetan culture and society (Miller 1956). In Ladakh, death societies of the *pha-spun* type have duties during death as well as during other rites of passage—childbirth and marriage, for instance. The associations are made up of agnates, but also of other persons interested in participating. Members worship a common deity, *pha-lha*, the god of the group, before undertaking a journey or on other occasions, to ensure good health.

Let me now stress three facets of the *guthi* institution that lead to a broader comparative perspective. To begin with, the *guthi* system of the Newar reflects a culture that places religion at the heart of its preoccupations and activities. There are no ethnic groups in Nepal that devote more time and money to rituals, festivals and offerings to the gods than the Newar. This population is without a doubt exceptionally ritually oriented. Among the Maharjan farmers of Kathmandu, the average number of festive days dedicated to religious ceremonies, including domestic events, is over 65 in a year. The Newar have clearly produced a hypertrophied symbolic world with few parallels in the Himalaya. Besides, the number of religious edifices within the Kathmandu Valley is without equivalence in the country, and perhaps even in South Asia. Their quantity and variety is emblematic of this culture. Every village, every quarter of a town possesses dozens of temples or altars dedicated to its gods. Sanctuaries and temples always mark out the territory. These edifices are of

fundamental importance in the layout of the localities, especially within the former Malla capitals, with their *maṇḍala* structure enclosed by circles of gods and goddesses. Territory is always religiously validated. The same can be said of any social groupings among the Newar: lineages pay homage to their ancestral *digudyaḥ*, persons belonging to the same neighbourhood worship the same Gaṇeśa, caste-fellows have their own Tantric deities, members of musical groups co-worship their god of music, and every association has its own deities. The shared deity legitimises the group, gives it its identity, and creates a mystical link between the partners. By the sharing of consecrated food that has first been offered to the deities, a sacred bond is created among the members.

Second, the institution under consideration reflects a society in which the state allows considerable autonomy to local populations. As a matter of fact, until very recently, the Nepali state interfered only in a minimal way in the life of its citizens: there was no registration of births and deaths, no cadastral mapping, no strict tax system, the administration of civil law was mainly in the hands of local headmen and chiefs, and so on. Lawyers, for instance, were traditionally not to be found among the people. They are new actors in Nepali public life. Formerly, ordinary day-to-day conflicts were settled within the group, not in a judicial court. Only major disputes came to the notice of the justice system. Even in the heart of the state, in the Old City of Kathmandu as well as all over the Valley of Nepal, a Newar *kaji* or *nāyaḥ* was usually in charge of minor court cases, divorces, and so forth. Such a situation still continues in many ways, not only in rural settings but also in towns. The heads of Newar associations were entitled to manage a wide range of affairs—a range that would have been unthinkable in most European states. Besides, a high proportion of *guthi* lands or endowments has long been private, *niji*, and is managed entirely by private associations. In the past, the state interfered in their affairs only in the absence of heirs.

Such a situation has numerous parallels in Asia. Let us take China south of the Yangtze as an example. In this country, too, society had for a long time, since at least the 9th or 10th centuries, been made up of a great number of private associations, very often polyvalent, controlling large sectors of social life. In the middle of the 13th century, these groupings in Hangzhou were dealing with poetry, literature, crafts, Buddhist rituals, archery, crossbow shooting, festivals for patron deities, and death ceremonies (Gernet 1994: 88-90). These powerful associations even undermined state institutions later on. According to the French Sinologist

Jacques Gernet (Ibid: 90), they were the descendants of old farmers' groupings linked to the god of the village's soil, a situation that recalls the Newar pattern. These Chinese groups have disappeared or have been considerably transformed in the post-communist period.

Finally, *guthi* are well adapted to a complex urban life and/or to densely populated, large villages that cannot be organised on the basis of kinship alone. Pyangaon village is a unique case in the Kathmandu Valley where the size of the locality and the relatively small number of its inhabitants permit an organisation of the society according to patrilineage. In other areas, the absence of profound and incorporated kin groups among the Newar requires the creation of different types of groupings, congregating their members around some common aim: offerings to the gods, death processions, cremations, music, and the like. This mode of grouping, borrowed from classical India, and probably more frequent in ancient Indian urban life than it now is, fills this need.

In this connection, Newar associations are reminiscent of the various voluntary societies that existed in Europe during mediaeval times. In addition to the flourishing guilds specialising in economic activities,[15] Italian and French towns of the 14th and 15th centuries possessed powerful associations, often based on a named quarter or neighbourhood. These groups, officially devoted to religious and charitable ends, were responsible for the organisation of local feasts, the accomplishment of religious activities, and the like. They played a very active role in city as well as family life, binding together very different people from the same locality (Rossiaud 1989). A person could belong simultaneously to six, seven, or even ten of these groups. These voluntary associations were not fundamentally different from their Newar counterparts, apart from two reservations: they were not bounded by caste, and they were apparently more open to other groups. Death societies also existed in these towns, as well as in rural areas of Europe, during the mediaeval period. Some of them are still active in certain regions of France, especially in the Calvados and Eure areas of Normandy (in the west of France). In French they are called *confréries*, *charités*, or *fraternités*, and are known by other, more local names as well. All of these confraternities present striking similarities to the Newar *sī guthi*: escorting the dead to the cemetery, providing a dress to the corpse or a special fabric to cover it, pro-

15 Economic *guthi*, of the guild or co-operative type, do exist among Newars, but these are confined to some castes and are more the exception than the rule (Toffin 1976*b*).

viding assistance to the bereaved family, frequent feasts uniting the members, membership limited to men, strict hierarchies between the various functions, systems of fines in cases of bad behaviour, importance of religious values, and so on (Segalen 1975).

Very different societies, situated geographically thousands of miles from each other, have thus created the same kind of institutions, drawn from a similar repertoire of social mechanisms, to answer the same religious and social needs. Although the caste system obviously differentiates South Asian and European urban societies from each other, *guthi* groups, as well as many other elements which cannot be examined here (in particular, a high percentage of mercantile and craft activities), place these societies in closer proximity and partially blur the caste-based East/West dichotomy.

Guthi, changes and modern society

The picture depicted in the preceding pages belongs in large part to the past, or is rapidly vanishing. It must be admitted that the *guthi* system is still very active in many Newar rural settlements, especially among Maharjan farmers and other associated agriculturist castes (Gāmo, Gathu, Balāmi, Desar, etc). Pyangaon village, to which I have returned of late, has retained its ancient social organisation in a remarkable way. In cities, too, the Maharjan have preserved their social structure quite strictly and behave in a more conservative manner on many matters than other castes. But in most cases, especially in urban areas, *guthi* are on the verge of disappearing. Bal Gopal Shrestha (2002: 161) gives a list of 41 socio-religious associations that have closed down during the last years in the small town of Sankhu. The same situation prevails in Panauti (Kabrepalanchok District). Many associations, which were responsible for certain festivals or dance performances, have recently disappeared. Even the *guthi* in charge of the lineage deity appears to be on the wane among many castes. They draw together only a small number of agnatic kin, without their families. The most numerous among the enduring *guthi* seems to be the death groups, with a few other exceptions here and there.[16] But in nearly all cases, *guthi* membership is no longer binding, as it once was (Quigley 1995: 101). In truth, a global dissonance has developed between these institutions and modern society.

This general collapse can be explained by a series of interrelated fac-

16 For the Citrakār painters and mask-makers, see Chapter 1.

tors. In the first place, the massive increase in spatial mobility and the accelerated movement of the population from the centre of the city to the suburbs and the surrounding countryside contribute to the change. As a matter of fact, the *guthi* system depends above all on a fixity and proximity of residence. The Nepali urban society of the Kathmandu Valley is evolving toward a mobile society where distant kin do not ordinarily meet one another. Members of the same death association thus find it increasingly difficult to come together for cremations, as is required by the rituals so as to prevent or lessen the danger of the departed one's becoming a *preta* ghost.

A recession in religious concern and interest can also be invoked. The people at present devote less time and money to rituals, and become reluctant to attend to their ritual duties and traditional obligations. Religion is not rejected, but the constraints of modern life and salaried work have reduced it to a less central position than it has traditionally occupied hitherto. The westernisation and modernisation of lifestyles, and the development of new media like television and video, even in rural settings, have altered mentalities and opened up a large part of the population to newer horizons and more materialistic values, widely different from the old socio-religious order, which had been permitted to remain relatively undisturbed until very recent times. Individualism has appeared at the same time, for example, in marital choices, and the traditional hierarchy prevailing in the *guthi* is rejected by the younger generations. Interestingly, men and women are at present attracted towards new ideas in religious matters. In this respect one can mention Theravāda Buddhism and the Kṛṣṇa Praṇāmī sect, which are thought to be better adapted to the modern situation and its values.

The method of financing charitable and religious institutions itself has changed. Since the downfall of the Rana regime in 1951, the state practice of making land endowments to temples or other religious and charitable institutions has become obsolete (Regmi 1976: 55). People still contribute for religious purposes, to construct a new temple, for instance, or to perform a special ceremony, but they do this mostly by subscriptions in money, and no longer by establishing endowments of private lands under the *guthi* system. Consequently, *guṭhī* land endowments are no longer an important aspect of state and individual practice.

These recent developments have to do with new egalitarian aspirations that are rapidly expanding in the society. Besides, a commitment to set up a more secular state has arisen in various arenas. Secularism, in its

origins a western conception, is proclaimed by a growing number of people who want to put an end to the interdependence between religion and political authority. This change in perception calls into question the validity of the Guṭhī Saṃsthān, which was formerly the custodian of religious and cultural sites. This institution is nowadays seen as a relic of the past. Nepalis believe the Guṭhī Saṃsthān is in dire straits. The difficulties of financing public ceremonies and cults of deities are more often than not ascribed to the incapacity of the Corporation than to inefficient administration. The absence of up-to-date and rigorous records of *guṭhī* lands in every part of the country has brought with it misuse and irregularities. Besides, temple managers have gradually taken for themselves the major share of the income from *guṭhī* lands. Economists also tend to criticise these lands, which yield no revenue to the state.

Internal quarrels have undermined the solidarity of many private associations and led to a total collapse of quite a few. It is difficult to determine whether disputes are more frequent currently than heretofore. In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, at a time when the Rana were engaged in the large-scale enterprise of Hinduising the kingdom, purity issues obviously led to many disputes on questions of relative status, not only among the Hindu but also among the Buddhist Newar castes. My impression is that quarrels have been common for a very long time, but that new individualistic and egalitarian concerns have multiplied these conflicts, and do not incline the people to reconstruct or join new associations. The younger generation is increasingly reluctant to participate as much as before in these endless festive meals, supplemented by high consumption of alcohol.

Among persons responsible for festivals and state-supported rituals, the general sentiment prevails that, in the past, *guthi* were rich and capable institutions with lavish endowments at their disposal, and that this situation has deteriorated because the Guṭhī Saṃsthān does not provide sufficient means to carry out the *guthi* duties. It is true that, in most cases, the Corporation has not compensated the *guthi* for the general rise in prices and economic costs over the last 30 years. *Guthi* are thus facing financial constraints that have obliged them to give up some ritual elements or even to cease performing the duty for which they were originally established. In the same way, land reforms launched in 1955-60 has led a large number of tenants or other people occupying collective properties to register private *guthi* lands in their own names and stop providing funds in cash or kind to the association to which they were

formerly attached. As the diminishing or disappearing *guthi* revenues have not been counterbalanced by the provision of new private resources, many religious associations set up for small festivals and minor cults are vanishing year after year.

At the same time, new associations have appeared that are totally different from the earlier *guthi* system, even if their names sometimes still make use of this older term. This is especially the case with the caste associations established after 1990, in the wake of the democratic movement. The Maharjan have created, for instance, a pan-*Jyāpu Mahāguthi*, whose structure reproduces that of democratic organisations, with branches assigned to diverse localities or districts, and whose leadership is invested in the junior generation and in social activists, instead of the traditional *thakāli* elders (Chapter 12). The Maharjan of Lalitpur have chosen to stay away from this organisation, and have established their own collective association, called *Jyāpu Samāj*. The Citrakār painters, for their part, launched a *Citrakār Samāj*, supposedly including all the Citrakār of the Kathmandu Valley, and of Nepal.[17] These new groups, which claim recognition from the government, are formed to preserve the caste's own customs, to pursue programmes of community uplift for their poorer members, and to defend their specific interests. They are mainly cultural and social organisations, but are often permeated by an unambiguously leftist political orientation. They are frequently interconnected across caste boundaries. These bodies are financed by subscriptions from their members, even when a construction is needed. It must be added that other kinds of organisations—scouts, women's associations, literary societies, and youth clubs—are being established and slowly replacing the traditional *guthi*. These groupings seem to be more attuned to the new social and cultural conditions than the somewhat fossilised associations of the past with their weighty hierarchies.

17 Personal information from Lubomira Palikarska, who is currently working towards a PhD on the Citrakār of the Kathmandu Valley under my supervision.

10

The Mwaḥni (Dasaĩ) Festival and the Caste System

In India, as in Nepal, the world of the gods and that of men are closely interrelated. Jan Gonda (1970, Chapter 1), the Dutch Indologist, attempted, for example, to show how, through his links with Agni, the god of sacrifice, Lord Śiva is situated alongside Brāhmaṇ priests and renunciation, whereas Viṣṇu, who upholds the world, and who is close to Indra, the king of the gods, belongs conclusively to the Kṣatriya, representatives of the imperium and of royalty.

Similarly, Georges Dumézil (1968), the French historian of religion and philologist, devoted a great part of his work to demonstrate that the main heroes in the *Mahābhārata* epic incarnate certain Vedic divinities and refer to the fundamental tripartition of Hindu society between sovereignty (magical and juridical), physical strength and fertility. The five Pāṇḍava brothers would each be associated with one of the three functions: Yudhiṣṭhira with the Brāhmaṇs, Bhīma and Arjuna with the Kṣatriyas, and Nakula and Sahadeva with the Vaiśyas, merchants, cattle-breeders and farmers. Though Indologists and anthropologists have clearly expressed reservations about the relevance of this tripartite clas-

---

First published as 'Culte des déesses et fête du Dasaĩ chez les Néwar (Népal)' in *Autour de la Déesse hindoue*, edited by M. Biardeau, *Purushartha. Recherches de Sciences Sociales sur l'Asie du Sud*, 1981, pp. 55-81.

sification so far as the Hindu cultural tradition is concerned,[1] the close links between men and gods have not been questioned.

The correlation between divine society and human society is sometimes taken even further. Following A.M. Hocart's insightful views, anthropologists have for a long time reported that in the Hindu world people of low castes are considered to be Asura demons, in opposition to the high castes, who are collectively associated with the Deva gods. One also finds a very strong relationship between, on the one hand, the low castes and the 'carnivorous' goddesses, and, on the other hand, between the high castes and the masculine divinities, who are more often 'vegetarian' (at least in their pacified forms). According to Madeleine Biardeau (1972: 183), goddesses would, above all, preside over the population's physical well-being, over harvests and, generally speaking, over local aspects of the *dharma* (social order), whereas masculine divinities would be rather more into the global socio-cosmic order and supreme religious values.

It is this last issue that I would like to address here. My purpose is mainly to get a better grasp of the role of the goddesses in the social structure of the Newar, a strongly Hinduised Nepali population, whose origins are centred in the Kathmandu Valley. I intend to show that the functions of the feminine divinities within this population are not simply reduced to prosperity and fertility, but also involve physical strength and the royalty. This is the central argument and the focal idea in this chapter. It will lead us to ponder the main constituents of the caste system and point out the importance of collective rituals for Newar society. My starting point will be the Dasaī (Durgā Pūjā or Daśarā; New. Mwaḥni or Mwaḥnhi) festival, a great family and collective ceremony that takes place every year in the autumn, from the first to the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āśvin (September-October). This festival, of Indic origin, represents one of the most important moments in the Newar calendar. It marks the end of the rainy season and the rice harvest, the basic crop in the Kathmandu Valley. It is accompanied by intense social activity which, as we shall see later, concludes with the renewing of all the forces of authority, of all the bodies of power.[2]

1 See, for instance, Biardeau, in a review of Hiltebeitel's book, *The Ritual of Battle, L'Homme*, XVIII (1978) 1 and 2, p. 211. See also Das (1982), who has pointed out the relevance of another tripartite classification in the conceptual order of Hinduism, i.e., Brāhmaṇ, King and Sannyāsi (renouncer).

2 For Dasaī ceremonies and rituals in Nepal, see, among numerous references: Anderson

There are very close links between Dasaĩ and the worship of the goddesses. During the ten days of the festival, men and women consecrate altars in honour of the feminine divinities, revere them, bathe them, and offer them animal sacrifices. They pray for the goddesses to bring happiness and good health. From a mythological point of view, all these ceremonies are based on a *Purāṇic* legend that retraces the battle of the goddess Devī/Durgā against the demons Mahiṣāsura, Sumbha and Niśumbha. After a hazardous fight, the goddess Devī manages to destroy the demons' army as well as their chiefs. In the course of the battle she receives the help of other feminine divinities, who are either manifestations of her own divine power, or emanations of the great gods of the Hindu pantheon. The tenth day of the festival, Daśamī or Vijayā Daśamī, commemorates Devī's victory over the demons. The gods' predominance is thus re-established; the king of the gods, Indra, recovers his throne, and the world order—which had vacillated for a moment—is restored.[3]

The text from which this legend is drawn, the *Devī Māhātmya* or *Caṇḍī pāṭha*, is a key element in the worship of the goddesses. It is read daily over the ten days of Dasaĩ, and each time a feminine divinity is revered. One can draw considerable merit from the reciting of this hymn:

> He who hears it devoutly will be delivered, by my grace, of any misfortune and will receive grain, children and wealth! Hearing this hymn [the *Devī Māhātmya*] and experiencing my appearances and my exploits in battle make a man a fearless hero. His enemies are all slain, his honour forever grows and his family is joyful: he who listens to the hymn! Similarly, listening to it, at the pacification rite, following a nightmare or when one's horoscope is unfortunate, will chase away his misfortunes: when his horoscope is better, nightmares will change into dreams of happiness! Children, bewitched by demons who seize on them, will be pacified, and so at the same time will friends who

1971: 142-55, Messerschmidt 1976: 76-80; Bajracarya 1971: 95-103; Krauskopff and Lecomte-Tilouine 1996. For the Newar Dasaĩ (Mwaḥni), cf. G.S. Nepali 1965: 405-11; Regmi 1966/II: 674-9; Toffin 1984: 531-7, and 1996*c* (in which a detailed account of the rituals celebrated in the former royal palace of Lalitpur is given); and Levy 1990. More recently, see van den Hoek 2004: 61-122.

3 Another legend about the origin of Dasaĩ refers to the fight of Rāma against Rāvaṇa, the king of Lanka. In the course of the battle, Brahmā invokes the goddess and charges her to help Rāma. The goddess accepts and sets off to the scene of the battle. For the first eight days she remains hidden. She only intervenes on the ninth day and then gives Rāma the power to kill his enemy. Cf. on this subject van Kooij 1972.

> quarrel. Indeed, one just has to recite this Celebration to destroy the power of all evil beings (*Devī Māhātmya*, 12, 13-19: Varenne 1975).

And this same text adds: 'In autumn, a great *pūjā* [offering] must be celebrated, where the [goddess's] hymn will be recited' (*Devī Māhātmya*, 12, 12). This clearly connects the Dasaĩ festival[4] with the myth.

The data that was used as a basis for this study was mainly collected in a small Hindu Newar town situated about 30 km east of Kathmandu. This urban settlement, Panauti, was the subject of my extensive research from 1975 to 1977. To clarify or complete a particular point, I will also from time to time refer to facts observed in other communities.

Durgā

In the *Devī Māhātmya* religious text, as in the corresponding ceremonies, the Goddess, Devī or Durgā, is both one and multiple. One, since she is considered to be the supreme, absolute and total divinity, the paramount energy supporting the three worlds, the one who created the universe and who combines within herself the powers of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Multiple since, in order to establish the world order, expel demons, and protect a territory, she takes on extremely diverse forms. In concrete terms, during Dasaĩ the Newar revere the Goddess under five different aspects: Durgā, Aṣṭa Mātṛkā, Nava Durgā, Taleju and Kumārī.

Durgā (or Bhagavatī), the central character in the *Devī Māhātmya*, presides over the festival. On the first day of Dasaĩ *(ghaṭasthāpanā)*, each family, except among the low castes, sets up an altar in honour of this goddess on the second or third floor of the house. The room that serves as her oratory must be closed and dark; in principle, strangers do not have the right to enter. The divinity is represented by a vase *(kalaśa* or *ghaṭa)* in which she is supposed to reside, and also by a chromolithograph that portrays her in the process of killing the demon Mahiṣāsura *(Mahiṣāsura-mardiṇī)*. On either side stand an oil lamp, the symbol of Gaṇeśa, and a cup, the symbol of Bhīmasena (Bhimsen). A few seeds of barley are sown *(jamarā rākhne*; New. *naḥlā swanegu)* in front of the altar.[5] Durgā is revered with rice, fruit, curd, honey, biscuits,

4 The spring Dasaĩ (Caitra Dasaĩ) will not be dealt with here. This ceremony is not marked in a significant way in the Newar religious calendar. The Newar word *Mwaḥni*, in fact, applies only to the Dasaĩ celebrated in the autumn.

5 In certain cases, barley is sown in nine small leaf dishes, representing the nine forms of Durgā. This rite also exists among Parbatiyā castes.

soya seeds, garlic and ginger as well as with flowers, incense and vermilion. A duck egg is offered to her and an oil lamp lit in front of her altar. The officiating person, who is always the head of the household,[6] then reads the *Caṇḍī pāṭha*. If he has received a Tantric initiation, he enters into meditation and mentally recites a certain number of secret formulae *(mantra)* accompanied by special hand gestures *(mudrā)*.

This ceremony is renewed over the following nine days. Each time the barley plants are watered. On the ninth day *(navamī)*, the head of the family offers a black goat to Durgā. Its blood is offered to the goddess and the head is temporarily placed in front of the altar.[7] As for the meat, it is shared amongst the family. It is also on this day that all the sharp tools and arms in the house are collected. They are put before Durgā and revered. Indeed Durgā is considered to be a warlike divinity; she is nearly always represented in the iconography with a sabre in her hand.

On the tenth day *(daśamī* or *ṭikā)*, all the members of the family gather round a banquet in Durgā's room. After having paid homage to the goddess, the head of the household draws a vertical line of soot above the base of the nose of his children and wife. He also anoints their foreheads with a little *akṣetā* (a mixture of curd, grains of rice and vermilion) and with yellow powder. The celebrant then gives to each member of the family a few barley shoots sown ten days earlier. The *jamarā* (shoots) are put either on their heads or behind their ears. After this, everyone bows down in front of the head of the family, thus paying their respects. Finally, comes the 'head feast' (New. *sī kāḥ bhway)*, in the course of which the parents share the head of the goat sacrificed the day before. In a family of six, the right eye goes to the father, the left eye to the elder son, the upper jaw to the younger son, the lower jaw to the elder daughter, the tongue to the mother and the muzzle to the younger daughter. The feast reaffirms the long-lasting hierarchical links within the family and the recognition of the father's authority.[8]

But that is not all. The goddess Durgā is also revered on a collective scale, in a small building situated west of the town (in Panauti). In Nepali,

6 It may happen that Durgā's altar is set up in the house of the lineage head. In this case, the officiating priest is the eldest of the oldest branch. The other members of the kin group only take part in the rituals on the tenth day of the festival.

7 Newar Brāhmaṇs, who are not supposed to offer animal sacrifices, replace the victim with a pumpkin (Nep. *kubhiṇḍo*), which they cut in two.

8 See Toffin 1976: 329-38.

this building is called *kot* (New. *kwāṭha)*, a word that means 'fort, military headquarters'. Ordinarily the *kot* is empty, but at the time of Dasaī, as in every house, an altar is set up in honour of Durgā within it. The goddess is symbolised by a sword. Grains of barley are sown before her. Durgā is revered in that place morning and evening over the ten days of the festival by a Brāhmaṇ and a Karmācārya priest assisted by a Suwāl (Jyāpu) farmer who acts as guardian of the sanctuary.[9] On the tenth day, the community offers her a goat. The sacrifice is followed by the distribution of barley plants among the population and by a ritual battle with calabashes between the people from the upper part and those from the lower part of the town. This fight is called *laṛāī mhitegu* in Newar (lit., 'war-play'). It is a reminder of the politico-military bearings of the festival. Indeed, it is known that in traditional India impressive military processions, with elephants and horses, took place on Vijayā Daśamī. That day was particularly appropriate for undertaking warlike expeditions (Kane 1955: 191). On this occasion, the sovereign had to leave his palace and walk towards the north-east; on the way out of town, he worshipped the gods and made an offering to the *śamī (Mimosa suma)* tree, which, according to tradition, had the power to destroy his enemies (Kane 1955: 158).[10]

The Aṣṭa Mātṛkā

In the beginning of the eighth section of the *Devī Māhātmya* hymn, the demons decide to throw the bulk of their troops into battle. Durgā/Devī cannot resist the mass of the Asura: she is encircled; everything seems lost. So the gods then decide to help the goddess by launching their respective energies *(śakti)* into battle. Consequently, Durgā finds herself helped by the *śakti* of Brahmā (Brahmāyaṇī), of Śiva (Māheśvarī), of Kumāra (Kaumārī), of Viṣṇu (Vaiṣṇavī), etc. These powerful and violent divinities are known in the Hindu pantheon as the Mātṛkā, the Divine Mothers. They generally form a group of seven or eight independent goddesses (Sapta or Aṣṭa Mātṛkā). Their intervention causes a rout among

9 On the Newar caste system, cf., among many references, Rosser 1966; Toffin 1984; Gellner 1992; Levy 1990. See also Chapter 11 of this book.

10 An allusion is made to this ceremony *(śamī pūjā)* in some versions of the *Mahābhārata*. Indeed, on the day of Vijayā Daśamī, after one year in exile in the forest, the five Pāṇḍava brothers withdrew the weapons they had hidden in the hollow of a *śamī* tree and begin the war against their Kaurava cousins. Cf. Underhill 1921: 56. But in practice this episode does not appear in the classic *Mahābhārata*.

the Asura and allows Durgā to emerge victorious.

The Mātṛkā goddesses play a fundamental role in Newar religion and cosmogony. Most of the cities in the Kathmandu Valley are surrounded by a symbolic enclosure of eight temples dedicated to the Divine Mothers (Gutschow and Kölver 1975; Toffin 1984). The divinities are represented there by uncarved stones. Each of these temples is associated with a particular direction:

Brahmāyaṇī	east	Vārāhī	west
Māheśvarī	south-east	Indrayaṇī	north-west
Kaumārī	south	Mahākālī	north
Vaiṣṇavī	south-west	Mahālakṣmī	north-east.

In some ways, the Divine Mothers act as guardians of the Directions, a role that is held in Classical Hinduism by the Dikpāla and Lokapāla. They keep watch over the territory they circumscribe, and defend the town against invaders. The Aṣṭa Mātṛkā also protect the city and its inhabitants against epidemics.

Similarly, each of these goddesses has an iconic representation (more often than not, a statue) that is kept within the settlement in a 'god's house' (New. *dyaḥ chē)*. This type of building is hardly distinguishable from domestic houses, architecturally speaking.

How are these goddesses revered during Dasaī? The first eight days of the festival are each dedicated to a different Mātṛkā. Let us take the case of the city of Panauti. Every evening, men and women walk in a procession towards a particular Divine Mother temple. The members of the procession place a crown of flowers on the altar and sing religious hymns in the temple. This ceremony is called *swāṃtāki wanigu* in Newar. On the first day, people visit Brahmāyaṇī, on the second day, Māheśvarī, on the third, Kaumārī, and so on. As a general rule, one must offer different ingredients and flowers to each goddess. For Brahmāyaṇī: coconut, *chāy swāṃ* (New.) flowers and *golcan* orpiment; for Māheśvarī: sandalwood, cucumbers and betel leaves; for Kaumārī: *rakta cāṃdan* vermilion (a mixture of red and yellow powder), pomegranates and *nauka* (New.) flowers; for Vaiṣṇavī: vermilion, lemon and *mwa* flowers; for Vārāhī: betel leaves, vermilion and the leaves of a climbing plant called *kwaula* (New.); for Indrayaṇī: bananas, flowers from the *Jonesia aśoka* tree and *golcan* orpiment; for Mahākālī: oranges, *rakta cāṃdan* and a flower called *hiphwo swāṃ* (New.); and for Mahālakṣmī: oranges, ver-

milion and leaves from the *tau phoji* tree (New.).[11]

Over the first eight days, devotees also go to bathe before sunrise at eight different sites along the two bordering rivers. Each of these places corresponds to a Mātṛkā temple. Afterwards, Panauti's people go round to the eight Divine Mothers of their city (New. *cāḥdankā wanigu).* Every evening, a Tantric Karmācārya priest offers cooked rice to the four most important Mātṛkā in the locality: Brahmāyaṇī, Kāthā Kaumārī (=Kaumārī), Māneśvarī (=Vārāhī) and Sankaṭā (=Vaiṣṇavī). The rice is placed in a wooden receptacle called *bau-pā.* The ceremony is called *kumārī wāyegu* (New.).

On the eighth day, this same Tantric priest sacrifices a goat to each of the eight Divine Mothers. The animal's head is lifted and its throat slit by a butcher. This rite is named *pīṭha pūjā.* If the budget for the festival does not allow eight goats to be bought, only one is sacrificed in honour of Brahmāyaṇī. The other Mātṛkā will be entitled to duck eggs and small rice cones (New. *gwaḥjā)* made of coarse flour.

On the ninth day, all the inhabitants of the urban area, men and women, make their rounds of the eight sanctuaries and offer, according to their means, to each goddess a goat, a chicken or a duck egg. Some devotees practise austerities to expiate their sins. They remain seated on a chair all day long, in front of the temple of their choice (most often that of Brahmāyaṇī), with nine oil lamps placed on their bodies: one on their head, and two each on their shoulders, knees, hands and feet. The penitent wears only a loincloth *(dhoti)* and a white turban. This expiation procedure is called *mhā mata* (from *mata*, 'lamp') in Newar.

On this ninth day, one also reveres the goddess Tripurasundarī (or Sundarī Maī), whose altar can be found in the middle of the city, next to the royal palace.[12] This divinity is closely associated with the eight Divine Mothers even though she is not one of them. She is honoured with sandalwood, betel leaves and *bhu swāṃ* (New.) flowers. A procession visits her sanctuary and lays a crown of flowers there, as they do for the Mātṛkā. It seems that this ninth divinity refers to the nine

11 This list of offerings is recorded in a notebook (in Newar) used by the Karmācārya priests to revere the Divine Mothers. We were not able to identify all the plants, as they are, in practice, rarely used in the ritual.

12 Generally speaking, the royal palace is built at the focal point of the town (cf. Gutschow and Kölver 1975; Toffin 1982). The only notable exception is that of Bhaktapur, where the palace is situated to the west. However, Vergati (1995: 92) reports that the Tripurasundarī sanctuary is also located in the centre of this royal locality.

forms of Durgā, to which we shall return later.

Two days after Vijayā Daśamī, on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Āśvin, the Newar from Panauti celebrate a festival to the glory of Brahmāyaṇī (Toffin 1984: 537-8). This goddess, who has a certain pre-eminence over the other Mātṛkā, has the peculiarity of having a large (and closed) temple on the periphery of the city, besides the usual 'god's house' located within the settlement. In the course of the festival, the jewels that represent the divinity are brought out of the inner 'god's house' and carried in procession through the urban area in a small palanquin. The musicians, as well as the merchants carrying torches, walk at the head of the procession. The festival is organised by a religious association, the Brahmāyaṇī *guthi*, which plays a fundamental role in the religious life of the locality. This association is headed by a group of notables (New. *pañca paḥmā)* who include representatives of the old administrative quarters of the city, and is in charge of initiating and organising most of the community's large collective ceremonies.

The Nava Durgā

The cult of the Nava Durgā is another aspect of goddess worship during the Dasaĩ festival. Here, as in other cases, the reference to the *Devī Māhātmya* is clear. These divinities are the nine forms that Durgā took to fight the Asura demons. All of them are terrible, awe-inspiring figures. They are placated only with blood sacrifices. The lists that Hindu literature gives vary according to the texts. In the *Purāṇa*, one finds: Ugracaṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Caṇḍogrā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Caṇḍā, Caṇḍavatī, Caṇḍarūpā, Aticaṇḍikā and Rudracaṇḍā (Banerjea 1975: 500). In the *Āgama*, there are: Nīlakaṇṭhī, Kṣemaṅkarī, Harasiddhi, Rudrāṃśa- Durgā, Vana-Durgā, Agni-Durgā, Jaya-Durgā, Vindhyavāsī-Durgā and Ripumāri-Durgā (1975: 500). For Bengali Tantric literature, Ghosh (1871: 67-8) cites Brahmāṇī, Kālikā, Durgā, Kārttikī, Śivā, Raktadantikā, Śokarahitā, Cāmuṇḍā and Lakṣmī. In Nepal, the *Padmagiri* chronicle gives the following list: Vajreśvarī, Koṭeśvarī, Jhaṅgeśvarī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Maṅgaleśvarī, Guhyeśvarī, Vatbaleśvarī, Rājeśvarī and Jayavāgeśvarī.[13]

Nava Durgā worship is extremely developed among the Newar. Four troupes of dancers are devoted to this group of wrathful goddesses in the Kathmandu Valley. One is located in Theco, south of Lalitpur, and the

13 Cf. Hasrat 1970: 25. For Nava Durgā, Monier-Williams (1970: 531) gives the following list: Kumārikā, Trimūrti, Kalyāṇi, Rohiṇī, Kālī, Caṇḍikā, Śāmbhavī, Durgā and Bhadrā.

others belong respectively to Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Kirtipur. In 1976, I was able to carry out detailed research in the first of these localities (see also Toffin 1996*d*). The temple there, in fact, contains fourteen deities. Facing north: Gaṇeśa, Brahmāyaṇī, Mahādeva, Kumārī and Viṣṇudevī. Facing south: Vārāhī, Mahālakṣmī and Kālī. Facing east: Bhairava, surrounded by Siṃhinī and Vyaṅginī, Śivadyaḥ, Seto Bhairava and Indrāyaṇī. All these divinities are represented by masks, except for Śivadyaḥ, Seto Bhairava and Indrāyaṇī. Practically the same list can be found in Bhaktapur. In the Newar *milieu*, the Nava Durgā are, therefore, mainly incarnated by the Divine Mothers. By extension, they also include some other masculine divinities such as Śiva, Gaṇeśa and Bhairava.

As for the origin of the Nava Durgā, the inhabitants of Theco recount the following legend:

> Long ago, a *yogī* of the name of Siddhapur[14] settled in the Nepal Valley. This ascetic had immense powers. He could bless barren women with a son, provided the mother gave him back the child once it reached the age of twelve. The *yogī* would then kill him on the altar of Durgā, his tutelary divinity, to whom he made a vow to offer human sacrifices. One year, the queen came to visit Siddhapur and asked him to give her a son. The ascetic accepted and fulfilled her wish with some magical pills. Twelve years later, after much reluctance, the queen handed over her son to Siddhapur. For several days, the young prince (Raj Kumar) was shut up in the ascetic's temple. One day, making the most of his guard's absence, he opened the door of the sanctuary and saw eight human heads hung above an altar. These heads said to the prince: 'Tomorrow Siddhapur will kill you as he has already killed us. If you want to save your life, listen: the ascetic will order you to bow down in front of Durgā. Then, he will behead you. Pretend that you don't know how to worship the goddess properly. The yogī will show you how to. So immediately take his sword, cut off his head and sprinkle us with his blood. We will then come back to life.' The prince followed this plan and killed the *yogī*. The eight human heads were liberated and with that of Siddhapur, they then turned into the Nava Durgā goddesses. To commemorate such a

14 This is obviously a distortion of the name of a town or some confusion on the part of the informant. However, Siddhapur comes up again in other legends in the Kathmandu Valley. Another version of this legend, much more detailed, has been published in Toffin 1996*d*: 219-20. In this variant, Siddhapur is the name of the place of the *yogī*'s hermitage.

prodigy, the king decided to build a temple in honour of these divinities and fixed the details of the cult.

The ritual homicide tradition mentioned in this legend still exists today in the rite: every twelve years, a human sacrifice should, in principle, be offered to the bloodthirsty Nava Durgā in Theco.

The main devotees and followers of this Nava Durgā cult belong to a special Newar caste, of rather low status: the gardeners of the Gathu (or Gāthā) caste. At Dasaĩ, the gardeners who are in charge of the sanctuary generally dance in certain places. They wear Nava Durgā masks as well as long white skirts that hang down to their ankles. In Theco, the troupe comprises twelve dancers. The audience revere the divinities and sacrifice animals to them: buffaloes, goats or chickens. The Gathu dancers themselves have to cut the throats of the victims offered to them and drink the animals' fresh blood. Together, they then drink alcohol from a human skull. Besides, in Bhaktapur the gardeners celebrate a specific ritual called *mū bāhā (bāṃ) lihigu* (New.) prior to each dance, during which one of the dancers (Bhairava) kills a small pig with his nail, by pulling an artery from the animal's trotter. In Theco, the killing of pigs is prohibited. Interestingly, all gardeners are supposed to be possessed by the divinities they represent. The dancing-masters themselves belong to the Gathu caste. They accompany the dancers with musical instruments and are in charge of controlling their trance.[15]

In the Nava Durgā troupe attached to Bhaktapur, one of the gardeners holds a vase containing a *Nerium oleander* (New. *sipha swāṃ)* flower as well as a fish. This animal plays an important role in the ceremonies. At each dance performance, one of the dancers (Seto Bhairava) has to try to throw a basket of fish over the spectators' heads. Such an act is a

15 Gosh (1871: 67-8) reports that during Daśarā (the Indian Dasaĩ) the Bengalis revere a bunch of nine different plants *(navapatrikā)* (see also Banerjea 1974: 490 and footnote 20 of this present chapter):

Brahmāṇī	:	*rambhā* (banana)
Kālikā	:	*kacvī (Arum colocasia)*
Durgā	:	*haridrā* (curcuma)
Kārttikī	:	*jayantī* (barley)
Śiva	:	*bel* (areca nut)
Raktadantikā	:	*dāḍima* (pomegranate)
Śokarahitā	:	*aśoka (Jonesia aśoka)*
Cāmuṇḍā	:	*māna* (paddy)
Lakṣmī	:	*dhānya* (paddy)

bad omen, so the crowd, consisting mostly of children, chases away Bhairava, while making fun of him. This ritual is called *nyā lākegu* (New.), lit. 'catch the fish'.

The worship of the nine forms of Durgā broadly expands to cover the limits of all the earlier-cited localities. The Gathu of Theco, for example, have to go to Lalitpur each year during the Dasaĩ ceremonies to perform a sacred dance in the precincts of the ancient royal palace. Similarly, the Nava Durgā from Bhaktapur go round the neighbouring communities (Thimi, Dhulikhel, Banepa, Panauti, Kandpu and Pasupatinath) just after Dasaĩ. In each settlement, devotees offer them animal sacrifices.

The Nava Durga's period of activity extends from Dasaĩ to the full moon of Jeṣṭha (May-June), i.e., until the rainy season starts. Throughout this period, any well-to-do person can call the Nava Durgā troupe to their house—on the occasion of some life-cycle rituals, for instance. Just before the monsoon, on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of Asār (June-July), the masks are burnt. The Newar Citrakār painters make a new series of them in September. But it is only in October, in Dasaĩ, that the nine goddesses actually come back to the human world. They are therefore absent from the Kathmandu Valley for the four months of the rainy season. This point is of significance, as it is precisely during this period that, in India as in Nepal, warlike expeditions traditionally cease. Dasaĩ thus marks the return of military activities, and the Nava Durgā are revered because of their martial characters. The Malla kings had the habit of worshipping them each time they set off on campaigns against their enemies. And even in the 19th century, under the Shah dynasty, the Nepali armies succeeded in vanquishing the Tibetans thanks, so it is said, to the Nava Durgā of Bhaktapur.

Taleju

This goddess, another form of Durgā, was the secret tutelary divinity *(āgādyaḥ)* of the ancient Newar kings. Each Malla king had a temple dedicated to Taleju (or Taleju Bhavānī) in his palace and worshipped her daily. According to the chronicles, this divinity was introduced into the Nepal Valley in the 14th century by King Harisimha Deva, originally from Tirhut (in Bihar) but whose ancestors came from the Deccan (see also Chapter 13). The original legends about the goddess mostly refer to an episode in the war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Taleju at first took Rāvaṇa's side; later, she joined Rāma, thus guaranteeing him victory. It is said that Rāma took the goddess back with him to his native town

of Ayodhya and made her its tutelary divinity.[16]

In Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, the three main Newar cities in the Valley, numerous sacrifices take place in the courtyard next to Taleju's temple during the night of the eighth or ninth day of Dasaĩ (Nep. *kālarātri*, lit. 'black night'). During this particular night, 108 buffaloes and an equal number of goats are slaughtered in honour of the goddess. The animals are sacrificed in a special way. Their throat is first slit, and then the jugular vein is pulled out. Blood gushes out and sprinkles all over the floor until death ensues. The head of the buffalo or goat is then totally severed from the body and laid in the inner sanctuary of the goddess's temple (Allen 1975: 20). The next day, the day of *daśamī*, the whole population comes to honour Taleju. It is the only occasion in the year when the goddess's temple is open to devotees. Taleju is indeed an Āgamic divinity subject to very severe restrictions; her worship is based on Tantric practices whose secrecy is the best guarantor of their effectiveness.

Panauti, which, according to tradition, was formerly a small royal city, also has its own Taleju goddess. The divinity's sanctuary is situated in the middle of the locality on the alleged site of the ancient royal palace. It is a simple hut, locally called Taleju *kot*, with a locked door. During the year, this place is empty, but at the time of the Dasaĩ festival the goddess is represented in the form of a pot. On the first day of the ceremonies the priests from the community set up the altar and sow grains of barley in the sanctuary. They are assisted, as in the case of Durgā, by a farmer who acts as guardian of the spot. The priests in charge revere the goddess both morning and evening for ten days. On the tenth day, a buffalo is sacrificed in front of the hut. The meat from the animal is distributed to the various members of the locality, irrespective of their caste and ethnic group. In the evening, the pot symbolising the goddess is carried in procession around the ancient royal palace in the presence of the priests and dignitaries belonging to the city. This is the Taleju Jātrā, the Taleju festival. The keeper of the *kot* makes garlands with barley shoots and hands them out to everyone present.

16 Cf. Allen 1975: 4. The goddess Taleju Bhavānī is also revered in India. She was formerly the tutelary divinity of the Maratha kings (Allen 1975: 65). It would be interesting to carry out a comparative study on this topic in Maharashtra (India), in order to determine whether the Newar facts are specific or whether they, as I believe, stem from the Indic tradition.

The Kumārī

The living goddess Kumārī, incarnated by a pre-pubescent young girl, is the last feminine divinity to be revered at Dasaĩ. This cult of Tantric origin (Tucci 1974: 123), is also known in India (Ghosh 1871: 43; Kane 1955: 170). What is particular among the Newar is that, among the numerous Kumārī worshipped within the Kathmandu Valley, the most important are considered to be manifestations of Taleju, the former tutelary divinity of the Malla kings. These living goddesses have consequently an obvious royal dimension. Newar legends referring to the origin of this cult are very clear about it. The most well-known version recounts that:

> Taleju had the habit of holding talks with the king in his palace every day. The sovereign ruled over his kingdom according to the advice she gave him. In particular, they used to play dice together. One day, the queen glimpsed the goddess in her husband's bedroom through the keyhole. Outraged, Taleju decided never to come to the palace again. The king asked her if he could not see her in another form. She accepted and told him that she would come back every year in the form of a young girl of the Bare caste (a high Buddhist goldsmith caste).

This legend, above all, concerns the festival of Kumārī (Kumārī Jātrā) which takes place every year in Kathmandu at the time of Indra Jātrā, in August-September.[17] However, it leaves no doubt as to the true identity of the royal Kumārī. These links can be verified in the ritual: during Dasaĩ ceremonies, the Kumārī of Kathmandu has to take part in worshipping Taleju and on the ninth day she carries the goddess's sword.

It is also during Dasaĩ, preferably during the eighth or ninth day of the festival, that the royal Kumārī are selected and set up in their new functions.[18] Shortly after midnight, the candidate is brought into the courtyard *(mulcok)* adjoining Taleju's temple, inside the royal palace. The heads of the 108 buffaloes that are offered to the small goddess every year are laid down all around the courtyard with oil lamps between their

17 For Indra Jātrā, see especially Bake 1961: 41-8; Nepali 1965: 359-69; Anderson 1971: 127-37; Toffin 1978*a*, 109-37, 1992, 2006; and van den Hoek 2004.

18 Except in Bhaktapur, where the enthronement ceremony takes place on the first day of the festival (Allen 1975: 33).

horns. The young girl has to go round the *mulcok* without showing any sign of fear. If she keeps calm, the Karmācārya priests and their assistants make her climb to the first floor of Taleju's temple for the enthronement ceremony *(kumārī sthāpanā pūjā)*. The young girl stands naked in front of Taleju's priests; she is first purified, then washed clean of all her former experiences. As the goddess's spirit enters her, her body is supposed to turn reddish. Her parents then come to dress her, put make-up on her and decorate her with jewellery. She then sits on the throne, *āsana* (in fact a simple seat), on which the priests have drawn a magic diagram, the symbol of Taleju. At this moment the young girl is consecrated Kumārī. She only gets back home at about five o' clock in the morning (Allen 1975: 10-11, 23-4).

There is an interesting link between worship of the Kumārī and that of Aṣṭa Mātṛkā (or of the Nava Durgā group of deities). Indeed, in the three chief towns of the Valley, a collection of nine young girls incarnates the eight Divine Mothers, plus another deity (identified sometimes with Ugracaṇḍī), at Dasaī. This group is called Gaṇa Kumārī. It also includes two boys, representing Gaṇeśa and Bhairava.[19] These children are all of the Śākya caste; they are recruited in the city's various Buddhist monasteries according to the same criteria as for the local Kumārī of second rank. On the ninth day of the festival, they are led in procession into the 'main courtyard', *mulcok*, inside the royal palace, and revered by Taleju's priests (Allen 1975: 20, 28, 35).

Like the large Newar towns, Panauti has its own Kumārī. The living goddess is chosen from among the farmer caste, from the family in charge of Taleju's sanctuary. She must not only be a virgin, but must also never have lost any blood. She is swapped for another as soon as she loses her first milk teeth. Worship is a simple affair. The Kumārī has neither any special costume nor jewellery; she never enters into direct contact with Taleju, as her parents do. She must eat only leftovers *(prasād)* of the rice dishes that are offered daily to Taleju during Dasaī. Prior to each of her meals she is revered by her mother.

A ritual division of society

Time has now come to consider the impact of the cult of the goddesses on the social structure. This cult is based on a very elaborate division of ritual work. In Panauti, seven castes have to undertake special tasks for the vari-

19 In Bhaktapur, a third boy incarnates Mahādeva/Śiva (Allen 1975: 32).

ous feminine divinities during the festival: the Brāhmaṇ and Karmācārya priests, the Suwāl farmers, the Kumhāḥ potters, the Nāy butchers, the Jugi (Jwagi or Kusle) tailor-musicians and the Poḍe fishermen-sweepers. The first four castes are pure whilst the last three are impure.

For the sake of simplicity, I have ranked all the Śreṣṭha here within the same caste. In fact, the situation is much more complex. It would be necessary to distinguish within this broad category a higher-status group (Chatharīya), from a lower group specifically called Śreṣṭha. These lower Śreṣṭas are even sometimes situated below the metal-working Tāmrakār artisans whose domestic priests are Brāhmaṇs in Panauti. Panauti also contains some Tamang and Parbatiyā families, which represent 3.48 per cent of its population.

The Brāhmaṇ and the Karmācārya are the main priests in charge of Durgā and Taleju. In addition, the Karmācārya celebrate the *pīṭha pūjā* in honour of the Divine Mothers. The farmers act as guardians for the sanctuaries of Durgā and Taleju. They have to prepare offerings and objects of worship for these goddesses over the ten days of the festival. They also assist the Karmācārya in the offering for the eight Mātṛkā deities. On the seventh[20] and tenth days of the festival the potters organise a dance during which one of them incarnates the goddess Mahākālī. The butchers are drum- and cymbal-players; they slaughter animals according to sacrificial rites and share out the meat between the various religious specialists. The tailor-musicians play the oboe and the drum at important rites and processions; in addition they are in charge of smearing the sacrificial site with clay and cow-dung. Finally the fishermen-sweepers act as custodians of the sanctuaries devoted to the Mātṛkā. They are entitled to take the offerings that devotees present to the goddesses. Every year, they must also provide wickerwork used for the Divine Mothers' worship.

20 Traditionally, the seventh day of the festival is called Phulpāti (from Nep. *phul*: 'flower' and from *pāti*: 'leaf'). On that day, one offers a bunch of flowers and fruit (=*phulpāti*) to the goddess Durgā. In Kathmandu, the bunch comes from Gorkha, the native town of the current royal dynasty. It is transported in a pot, a symbol of Durgā, and is placed in a special room in the Hanumān Ḍhokā palace (Anderson 1971: 146-7). This rite is, above all, widespread amongst Parbatiyā castes, but it is also celebrated in the Newar urban areas that live in contact with Nepali-speaking populations. In Panauti, the *phulpāti* comes from Panckal, a small market town situated in the lowlands, at an altitude of 900 metres. A Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇ has to carry it. He is greeted at the entrance to the city by the potters, who play music and perform a Mahākalī dance. On this occasion the community offers a goat to Māneśvarī (=Vārāhī), one of the eight Divine Mothers who surround the urban settlement.

Table 3: **Newar-speaking castes in Panauti (1976)**

	Name of caste *(jāt)*	Occupation, religious functions	No. of households	Population	% of total
1	Brāhmaṇ (Dyaḥ Bhāju)	Hindu priest	2		0.34
2	Vajrācārya (Gubhāju)	Buddhist priest	1	5	0.15
	Buddhācārya (Bare)	goldsmith	10	74	2.57
3	Śreṣtha (Śeśyaḥ)	trader	290	750	60.20
4	Tāmrakār and Udās	coppersmith and metal-worker	24	242	8.34
5	Suwāl (Jyapu)	farmer	17	124	4.27
6	Kumhāḥ (Prājāpati)	potter	14	77	2.65
7	Bhāḥ (Kārāmjit)	functionary at funerals	1	2	0.06
8	Sāymi (Mānandhar)	oil-presser	15	74	2.55
9	Kataḥ (Suddhakār)	ritual functionary at birth	7	38	1.31
10	Nau (Nāpit)	barber	8	59	2.03
11	Putuwār	palanquin carrier	4	16	0.50
12	Nāy (Khaḍgī)	butcher	21	145	5.00
13	Jugi (Kusle)	tailor-musician	7	39	1.30
14	Poḍe (Dyaḥlā)	fishermen-sweeper	33	145	5.00
	Total		**454**	**2,800**	**96.52**

The persons among these castes who have to undertake a particular ritual task are called *rakami*, from *rakam*, a Nepali word that formerly denoted families liable to the State for some commercial service and who, in exchange, received a field or were exonerated from paying taxes. The most spectacular distribution takes place on the last day of the festival *(daśamī)*. On that day, the buffalo that has been sacrificed to Taleju is divided into theoretically 24 parts (a religious figure associated with the idea of totality). At the time of my study, the buffalo was, in fact, divided into 25 shares, perhaps because the head is kept aside and is seen to represent the whole animal.

- 4 parts go to the farmers
- 1 part to the potters
- 1 part to the Karmācārya priests
- 1 part to the Brāhmaṇ priests
- 3 parts to the Śreṣṭha traders who carry torches during night processions
- 4 parts to the butchers
- 1 part to the fishermen-sweepers
- 1 part to the tailor-musicians

- 1 part to the neighbouring Tamang, who celebrate rituals at the summits of neighbouring hills to ward off hail over the ten days of the festival
- 1 part to the musical association
- 1 part to the former representatives of the town's quarters
- 4 parts to the religious association in charge of Brahmāyaṇī
- 1 part to the municipal employees *(mā* or *māne)*
- 1 part to the former head of the urban area *(dwāḥre)*

The parts are roughly distributed according to caste hierarchy. The Brāhmaṇ and the Karmācārya, who occupy the highest rung, are each entitled to a leg. On the other hand, the impure castes take the hooves, the tail and the entrails. As for the head of the animal, it is eaten two days later by the members of the religious association in charge of Brahmāyaṇī and by the former head of the urban area, at a banquet called *balam bhway* (New.).[21]

These ceremonies, therefore, portray an ideal picture of the caste system. Most of the castes join forces, according to their degree of purity, to make the festival a success. One may even say that their place and their role in society stem from ritual functions assigned to them in the course of large collective rituals. The Brāhmaṇ, for example, is only allowed to carry out rituals in private families *(jajmān)* within the town if he performs his ritual duties at Dasaĩ. In other words, the religious and, more particularly, the sacrificial structures serve as a model for society as a whole. According to Hocart's expression (1970), the ritual organisation plays the 'role of coordinating body', 'of nervous system' for the general social structure.

Karmācārya Hindu priests in Newar society

Of all the religious specialists, it is the Hindu Karmācārya (or Ācāḥju) Tantric priests who are most closely linked to the goddesses. These priests are part of the Śreṣṭha, a vast group with rather vague boundaries, grouping together more than 25 per cent of the Newar population in the Kathmandu Valley. The Śreṣṭha are divided into four or five status groups that do not

21 In every important Newar locality of the Valley, Dasaĩ festivals are partly funded by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān, the state organisation in charge in administering temples and the country's religious heritage. Each year, Panauti receives a lump sum of 900 rupees from this organisation. This money, managed by the former head of the community *(dwāḥre)*, is mainly used to buy animals for sacrifices.

always intermarry. In principle, the Karmācārya belong to the highest section, that of the Chatharīya aristocracy, which also includes the Jośī astrologers, the Malla royal family, the Amātya ministers, the Rājbhaṇḍārī chamberlains, the Kasaju (Kāyaṣṭa) scribes and the Pradhānāṅga advisers.[22] All these 'clans' *(thar)* have Kṣatriya status and wear the sacred thread. In ancient times, they were attached, via their functions, to the royal palace, and they formed the kingdom's governing body.

According to a relatively widespread tradition, the Karmācārya are degraded Brāhmaṇs. They were excommunicated from their caste because they did not respect the Brahmanical precepts and they married Śreṣṭha women (Nepali 1965: 157). For their part, the local chronicles indicate that these priests are originally from India; they came to settle in the Kathmandu Valley in the 14th century, with King Harisimha Deva and the goddess Taleju (Lévi 1905, vol. ii: 22).

Whatever the case, the Karmācārya play a fundamental role in the religious life of the Newar. They are the main priests in charge of the Śākta, dangerous and powerful divinities.[23] They participate in the cult of the goddesses either jointly with the Brāhmaṇ or on their own. In the first case (in Panauti, for Taleju and Durgā), the Brāhmaṇ draws the magic diagram representing the divinity on the ground and reads Vedic texts. The Karmācārya recites *mantra* (magical spells), executes *mudrā* with his hands and touches the different parts of his body with his fingers *(nyāsa)*; he arranges offerings on the diagram and blesses the animal victim prior to the sacrifice. In the second case, the Karmācārya directs the ceremonies entirely (in Panauti, for the Aṣṭa Mātṛkā) and is the only person in charge. The most striking example is that of Taleju and of the royal Kumārī in Kathmandu. The Brāhmaṇ have no role to play in the cult of these two

22 According to Gutschow and Kölver (1975: 57), the Karmācārya from Bhaktapur belong to a group of a slightly inferior status called Panctharīya. But this is a classification drawn up by a Newar Brāhmaṇ that is far from accepted by everybody. In Panauti, two groups of Karmācārya exist: the Bidyārpita and the Bhailaḥ (from Bhairava). Only the first are part of the Chatharīya, with the second being of inferior rank.

23 These include feminine *and* masculine divinities. Several male gods from the Hindu pantheon, such as Gaṇeśa, Bhairava, Śiva and Bhīmasena, are indeed worshipped according to a specific Tantric ritual and are sometimes ministered to by a Karmācārya. Besides, it is very difficult to isolate the cult of the goddesses from that of the masculine deities. We have seen, for example, that Śiva, Bhairava and Gaṇeśa are very closely linked to the Nava Durgā. Similarly, each Divine Mother is, in principle, associated with a particular Bhairava (Aṣṭa Bhairava). It is also important to stress that Tantrism has permeated the cults of the entire Hindu and Buddhist pantheons.

divinities, though they may occasionally have to cook rice for the offerings. The Karmācārya is the main officiating priest; he performs the whole ritual, and, in turn, is assisted by Śreṣṭhas and Jyāpu farmers.

The Karmācārya also act as domestic priests. They have hereditary clients, *jajmān*, especially among the Śreṣṭha for whom they celebrate—accompanied by a Brāhmaṇ—the main life-cycle rituals (marriage, funerals). They may even perform on their own a fire sacrifice *(homa)*. In exchange for their services, they receive sacrificial fees *(dakṣinā)*.

Newar Hindu society, therefore, comprises two categories of influential priests: the Brāhmaṇ and the Karmācārya. What are the relationships between them? For many, the Brāhmaṇ specialise in Veda and the Karmācārya in Tantra. Only the former have the right to read the Vedic texts, and only the latter have the right and the power to celebrate the cult of the Śāktic divinities. The privileges of the Karmācārya would derive from the Tantric *dīkṣā* initiation that the young man optionally receives (or 'takes', as one says in Newar) after the *upanayana* brahmanic initiation. This opposition does not, however, correspond to reality. The *dīkṣā* is not reserved for the Karmācārya alone; it belongs to everyone, including, theoretically, impure castes (for India, cf. Chakravati 1963: 3). According to a certain number of Brāhmaṇs *(Śākta* Brāhmaṇs), initiated in Tantric rites, the magic formulae received at the time of the *dīkṣā* are as important as the Vedic hymn *(gāyatri)* revealed to the initiate at the time of *upanayana*. Furthermore, this same opposition is often used to distinguish the Newar Brāhmaṇ *(Tāntrika* or *Śākta)* from the Nepali-speaking Brāhmaṇ *(Veda)*. This clearly shows how relative all this is.

Considering these rites, one notes that the two types of priests complement each other, but in a hierarchical way. As a matter of fact, Tantric rituals include meat and alcohol offerings to the divinities. They cannot be performed directly by Brāhmaṇs, owing to the risk of their losing their purity. To carry out such rituals, Brāhmaṇ priests therefore need low-status intermediaries. These intermediaries are the Karmācārya, who have a lesser degree of purity than the Brāhmaṇ and, therefore, inferior to them. Such a hierarchy is also expressed in the funeral rites. The Brāhmaṇ celebrate the ceremonies in honour of the *pitṛ*, the benevolent manes, taking the form of the family's paternal and maternal ancestors; whereas the Karmācārya deal with the *preta*, the spirits of the wandering dead, threatening to their next of kin and considered to be ghosts (Toffin 1979*b*).

These relations are experienced in a conflicting manner. The Brāhmaṇ

tend to despise the Karmācārya, to reject them outside the strictly Vedic ritual. They recall that these Tantric priests were originally outcaste Brāhmaṇs and that they cannot claim to direct the most sacred rituals. For their part, the Karmācārya insist on their specific power and their role in the goddesses' worship. They alone, they maintain, know the magic formulae appropriate for awakening and controlling the ambiguous Śāktic divinities. As for their ancestors, they were, according to them, all of Kṣatriya, i.e., royal, rank. Tensions are further marked by the intense competition in which Brāhmaṇs and Karmācāryas are engaged in order to obtain positions *(pūjārī)* in the large temples in the Kathmandu Valley. These posts are, in fact, quite lucrative; they provide revenue and prestige to the holder.

Arbitration in these affairs falls to the king. If the Karmācārya occupy a predominant place in the cult of the Śāktic divinities, this is largely due to the former Malla sovereigns. These very kings granted them the power and privileges *(adhikāra)* they still possess in religious matters today. The Karmācārya used to, therefore, deal directly with the palace from the very beginning. The local chronicles clearly indicate that they arrived in the Kathmandu Valley as Taleju priests with King Harisimha Deva. It is likely that they became domestic priests for *jajmān* patrons only subsequently. This point is important, since the palatial cults, entrusted to the Karmācārya, were (and to a certain extent still are) crucial for royalty. In another piece of work (Toffin 1993: 133-4), I showed how the benediction granted every year by the living goddess Kumārī to the sovereign during Indra Jātrā, in August-September, may be interpreted as a rite for renewing royal power. One can then fully appreciate the genius of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal's unifier, who had himself blessed by the living goddess just after having conquered Kathmandu during Indra Jātrā. Through this ritual, he became legitimised directly at the hands of the living goddess as the new sovereign of the kingdom.

Taleju also plays a fundamental role with regard to royal power. The scene of the dice game between the king and the goddess as evoked in the legend of the Kumārī's origin (cf. *supra)* is eloquent in this respect. In the Indian tradition, the dice game has a cosmogonic value: it is a source of order, reordering the cosmos after a period of turmoil (Gonda 1962: 201). The goddesses Taleju and Kumārī, therefore, support the king's sovereignty; they are essential attributes of kingship.[24]

24 For parallels in India, see Gupta and Gombrich (1986).

All the goddesses who intervene during the Dasaī ceremonies are either martial deities, or divinities very intimately linked to royal power. In both cases, they are closely associated with the Kṣatriya, the second order *(varṇa)* of traditional Hindu society, associated with the monarchy and the army.

Let us sum up the conclusions we have so far reached for each divine figure. Kumārī and Taleju help the sovereign to ensure socio-cosmic order and legitimise his authority in the eyes of the population. The Nava Durgā are invoked during battles against enemies and are more particularly revered during the period of military activity, from October to June. The Aṣṭa Mātṛkā protect the city against dangers from outside and mark out a religious space, the centre of which is occupied by the royal palace (Toffin 1979*a*). Durgā, who possesses a sanctuary in each fort and each garrison, presides over the country's defence.

These feminine divinities are, therefore, all summoned by the king for the perpetuation of his kingdom and the maintenance of his power.[25] Dasaī also includes numerous military or royal rites: elephant or horse processions, battle enactments, offerings to the *śamī* tree, etc. All these elements point to the following: the festival transposes the mythical battle between Deva and Asura on to a sociological plane. In this way, the king's authority is strengthened and hierarchical ties are consolidated at a family level. Besides, in Hindu texts, Dasaī is considered to be the Kṣatriya festival *par excellence*, while Janaipurnimā is reserved for the Brāhmaṇ, Divāli for the Vaiśya and Holī for the Śūdra (Gonda 1965: 326-7).

Not only are the goddesses on the king's side, but they are also ministered to by priests of Kṣatriya status. As far as this point is concerned, the disjunction between Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya, status and power, which, according to classical texts, is a fundamental trait of Hindu society (Dumont 1980*a*), is not entirely respected. In the Newar case, the Kṣatriya possess religious prerogatives that, in principle, are reserved for the

25 Of course, other feminine divinities exist, such as Sarasvatī or Pārvatī, who, with their benevolent, pure and vegetarian forms, are linked to the Brāhmaṇ. By contrast with the wild bloodthirsty goddesses *(ugra)* reviewed in this chapter, they are married. However, on the whole, these mild deities *(saumya)* play a lesser role in the Newar religion than the blood-accepting and carnivorous divinities who are the focus here. The Newar also revere numerous goddesses who preside over the harvests, the rain and, generally speaking, prosperity. Among them, let us cite: Phulcoki Māī, Luti Māī (or Ajimā), Annapūrṇa, Dinācwa Māju, Lakṣmī, Lhāsāpāko Sasumāju, etc. These divinities are either 'vegetarian' or 'carnivorous'. It would be a grievous mistake to limit all these goddesses to a single of the three functions set out by Dumézil (1968).

Brāhmaṇ. The spiritual and the imperium principles are always relatively well separated (Karmācārya and king), but it is within the Kṣatriya order itself that this division operates. In that very case, the Brāhmaṇ only represents an abstract reference to the ideal Hindu image that the Newar intend to give of their society. It would be interesting to find out whether this situation is due to a historic accident ascribable to the local influence of Tantrism and/or Buddhism,[26] or whether it is not more deeply rooted in the forever conflictive relationship between the Brāhmaṇ and the king.[27]

26 In this chapter only Hinduism has been dealt with. But the Newar also have a long Buddhist tradition behind them, and till today a great part of their population (especially if Jyāpu farmers are included) call in Buddhist priests for their rituals. It is a fact that in Buddhism the king occupies a superior position to the Brāhmaṇ priests (cf. Tambiah 1976 and Allen 1978: 16). He is the supreme incarnation of moral law and of socio-cosmic order on earth; divine and royal attributes are intermingled in him. It is not impossible that such ideas exerted a certain influence in the Kathmandu Valley and allowed the Newar Kṣatriya to secure some religious privileges that were, in principle, forbidden to them. The question is complex, however, since the Newar continue to differentiate between the imperium principle (king) and the spiritual principle (Karmācārya and Brāhmaṇ), whereas in Buddhism the *artha* and the *dharma* are more or less taken together (Tambiah 1976). Otherwise, Newar Buddhism and Hinduism are essentially Tantric, and there are few fundamental differences between the two confessional groups, as far as both their beliefs and their rituals are concerned. Hence the difficulty in clearly differentiating between the two traditions. As far as Tantrism is concerned, I have taken up the analysis by Snellgrove, who saw a more sacred conception of royalty in this religious movement than in either Hinduism or traditional Buddhism. Cf. Snellgrove 1959: 204-18.

27 I would like to point out two publications on the subject dealt with here: J.H. Teilhet 1978: 81-98, and *Tripurārahasya,* trans. M. Hulin (Paris, Fayard, 1979). J.H. Teilhet's article is particularly important and contains a wealth of information on the Nava Durgā cult. I have retained four main points: 1) In the town of Bhaktapur, Tripurasundarī is part of the Nava Durgā. She is represented by a mask that is kept in a hidden place in the temple of the nine goddesses, without ever being shown to the non-initiated. This identification confirms and explains the links recorded in Panauti between the cult of the Aṣṭa Māṭṛkā and that of Tripurasundarī; 2) There is a close relation between Taleju and the Nava Durgā. J.H. Teilhet reports that just before starting to dance, the Gāthā (Gathu) gardeners go to Taleju's temple so that this goddess can give life and power to the Nava Durgā masks. Eight months later, at the end of the Jeṣṭha month (May-June), the troupe of dancers comes to Taleju's temple; the goddess's priest then withdraws the sacred power from the nine Durgā masks (p. 95). 3) In Bhaktapur, Taleju's most important priest is a Brāhmaṇ (a Śākta Brāhmaṇ), not a Karmācārya as in Kathmandu. 4) Besides its royal aspects (not cited by the author), the cult of the Nava Durgā contains numerous elements linked to fertility of the earth and agricultural prosperity. If it rains on the day the divinities' masks are cremated, one takes it as a good omen for the coming paddy harvest. In the same way, the ashes of these masks are put in a pot, and then laid down in a river close to the cremation site so 'that the paddy fields are regularly supplied with water during the monsoon' (p. 97).

11

Funeral Priests and the Meaning of Caste

Introduction: The role of kingship in the caste system

As all scholars concerned with Nepal know, King Jayasthiti Malla (1382-1395) is credited by the local chronicles with having promulgated an important reform of the caste system in the Kathmandu Valley and its surroundings. It is less known that, according to the same historiographical sources, the sovereign also reorganised the funeral ceremonies of the Malla Hindu kings who ruled over the Valley during the whole mediaeval period (13th-18th centuries). The chronicle *Padmagiri* asserts that Jayasthiti Malla ordered that all the '36 castes' of the Nepal Valley, i.e., the whole population of the Kathmandu basin, should attend the funeral procession of the dead king. The representatives of these castes *(jāt)* were compelled to precede the bier of the ruler. Each caste had to play different sorts of musical instruments (Hasrat 1970: 55). The Buddhist chronicle translated by Wright (1966: 124) reported the same rule and

First published in 1987 as 'Funeral Priests and Caste System in the Kathmandu Valley', in *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by Niels Gutschow and Axel Michaels, Sankt Augustin, VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1987, pp. 217-33. The book was part of the proceedings of a symposium on Nepal studies held in Lübeck, Germany, in 1984. It has been slightly revised here. The date of the writing must be taken into account when considering the importance granted in the following pages to the kingly model within the social structure. Since the 1970s, the royal function and the Shah monarchy have both considerably atrophied.

added that the delegates of all the 'four *varṇa*', i.e., the entire caste hierarchy, had from that time on the obligation to take part in the procession of the departed king up to the burning *ghāṭ*.[1]

It is not reported whether these regulations were really effective. In fact, the obligation for 'all the 36 castes' to play a particular musical instrument during the king's funerals rapidly fell into disuse. One century later, the king of Kathmandu, Surya Malla (1520-1530), ordered that no one but oil-pressers (Mānandhar) should be entitled to precede the corpse of anyone of the 'Newar tribe', playing on 'established instruments of music' (Hasrat 1970: 63)—'Newar tribe' being an expression which included members of the Malla royal family, even though the kings would probably have rejected this inclusion. This privilege was granted to the Mānandhar as a reward for having killed a furious demon called Bālla (Balāsura?), who used to violently take corpses of men on their way to the cremation ground.

However that may be, Jayasthiti Malla's rule was followed for some time. It corresponded to ideas and concepts which were deeply rooted in Malla society. The funeral ceremonies of the Malla kings were undoubtedly a pre-eminent representation of the caste system, which was already the basic organising principle of Kathmandu Valley society at that time. They were a kind of microcosm of the society, the epitome of the kingdom's social, political, economic and religious system. As in most South Asian cortèges, the mourners had to march in rows according to their caste rank. This ritual enactment was obviously a validation of the existing hierarchical order. The central position of the departed ruler corresponded itself to the paramount influence of the king in the society. Malla Hindu kings were the pillars of the caste system and the functioning core of the country. They promulgated laws and codifications, they maintained social order, and, from a general point of view, were responsible for the *dharma* (the order of the world) inside the kingdom. As in most places in India, rulers were also considered to be an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu[2] and concentrated in their person some religious representations. The palaces, surrounded by numerous temples, were constructed in the centre of the city, and were viewed (as royal festivals clearly indicate) as the axis of the world. In addition, the royal city appears to have been laid

1 Cf. also Lévi (1905i: 237) and Höfer (1979: 194).

2 This belief is reported in the Kathmandu Valley from the 14th century onwards (Regmi1965i: 484), but it is undoubtedly more ancient.

out according to a geometric ordering scheme, inspired by magical cosmograms, *maṇḍala* and *yantra*, and probably endowed with esoteric significance (Toffin 1993).

Kingship is therefore crucial to understanding the old Newar social structure. To a large extent, the arrangements and social patterns of the indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley are based up to the present time on this old background. As will be stressed in this current chapter dealing with funerals, the Newar caste system—as probably any other caste system in South Asia—cannot be explained only by the polarity between pure and impure, so central in the theory of Louis Dumont. This polarity is clearly crucial. But the Hocartian king-centred model is also to be taken into account, with its insistence on kingship and particularly the religious dimension of royal activity. Newar society perfectly illustrates the central role of the king in the overall social order. It exemplifies the sacrificial nature of the caste system and the relevance of royal ceremonies for the maintenance of the socio-cosmic order of the kingdom and its inhabitants. The king is the sacrificer, the *yajamāna* (Skt.); he sustains the harmony and the prosperity of his kingdom through his ritual activities. All the evidence shows that the Malla sovereign was the symbolic centre of the social and ritual systems even though Brāhmaṇs were situated above him in rank. The caste system, as a whole, was ordered in relation to him.

These Malla kingdoms of the mediaeval ages collapsed in the second half of the 18th century, and have today totally disappeared as self-governing units. Nowadays, a new dynasty holds political power and rules over a realm much larger than the microscopic kingdom-states of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Banepa. It is nevertheless possible to find traces of some religious elements of these ancient political units in contemporary Newar settlements. For instance, the main festivals of the former royal cities still start (and end) in front of the old Malla palaces, *lāykū*. 'Cities' rituals are royal rituals, where the traditional relationships between different castes are publicly enacted again and again' (Quigley 1995: 324). In each of the three major kingly Malla capitals, the sword of the former sovereigns is up to the present time carried in procession during these major ceremonial events. A thorough analysis of these festivals discloses the pivotal role of the king and their relevance to the overall hierarchy forming the basis of the present social system (Toffin, 1992, 1993, 1996*c*, 2006).

As a matter of fact, Newar towns—where the caste system reached its

fullest development—had preserved most of their identity until a very recent period. Their structure has not changed very much since the Malla Period, and they can still be considered traditional, pre-industrial cities, strongly influenced by ritual.[3] The caste system, which is based on fundamental religious notions, is still the organising principle of their society. Though the Malla kings were dethroned in 1768-69, the heads of these Newar localities still, to a certain extent, incarnate the royal function at a local level according to old Hindu schemes. Moreover, the Shah kings have endorsed many functions formerly held by Newar sovereigns. By perpetuating Hindu monarchical institutions and conceptions since the 18th century, they have undoubtedly contributed to the preservation of this old Newar heritage.

This chapter focuses on the various obligations the different segments of Newar society have to fulfil during the funeral ceremonies of local dominant castes—the ones who, as representatives of the king, play a predominant role in the organisation of ritual activities. In the light of these religious functions, we shall also reconsider the underlying principles of the Newar caste system and the notion of the priest in that society. I shall restrict the scope of my study to the Hindu dominant castes, or those considered as such, on the basis of materials collected principally in the small Hindu town of Panauti.[4]

Socially determined ritual functions

Although all the castes do not participate in the funeral procession, fourteen among them have specific religious duties to perform in the case of the death of a person belonging to a dominant caste.

1. The **Brāhmaṇ** (or Barmhū, Rājopādhyāya). They attend the *śrāddha*, literally, 'offering made with faith' *(pyā thayegu)*,[5] which have to be performed daily along a river during the ten days following the cremation *(daś kriyā)*. The main purpose of these ceremonies is to assemble a new 'body' for the deceased in its ghost form, *preta* (or *pret)*, a being which does not have any living corpse, any material basis. These rituals

3 The current cities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur can no longer be characterised in that manner. The capital, Kathmandu, in particular, is changing at a fast pace into an ever more cosmopolitan town.

4 For a detailed analysis of mortuary rituals among Newars of high castes, from the cremation until the commemorative ceremonies, cf. Toffin (1979). Cf. also Nepali (1965: 125-145).

5 *Pyā* in Newar designates the ball of cooked rice or flour of some kind which is the most characteristic offering to the departed during *śrāddha* funeral ceremonies (Skt. *piṇḍa)*.

are also intended to feed and refresh this ghost who hovers, thirsty and hungry, in vague discontent, near the house of the deceased. The Brāhmaṇ also performs the ritual of purification *(du byēkegu)* which takes place on the tenth day after cremation, as well as all the *śrāddha* ceremonies which have to be organised at intervals during the upcoming year of mourning and the ones which regularly commemorate every year the death of such and such person. Moreover, the Brāhmaṇ has to perform the ritual called *saptāha* in a case of accidental death, to appease the wandering spirit of the departed which otherwise may cause injury to close agnatic relatives living in its former abode. In Jyāpu peasant villages, the Brāhmaṇ is only invited on the first annual anniversary of death *(dakilā)* when the year of mourning is over, and on the *sora śrāddha*, which is performed in honour of the ancestors during the first lunar fortnight of the month of Āśvin (September-October).[6]

2. The **Karmācārya**. These Tantric priests, belonging to the high Hindu castes (Chatharīya, Śreṣṭha), help the Brāhmaṇ during most of the *śrāddha* ceremonies. While the Brāhmaṇ recites Vedic texts and gives instructions for the conduct of the ritual, the Karmācārya mutters magical formulae, *mantra,* makes *mudrā* with his hands, and prepares the oblations to be offered to the spirit of the deceased. When the Brāhmaṇ is busy elsewhere or when he is sick, the Karmācārya may sometimes officiate alone, even though the ceremony includes a fire sacrifice, *homa*, one of the rituals of highest value in Hindu religion. In villages, liturgical specialists called Ācāḥju and belonging to the Jyāpu agriculturist caste, often serve as substitutes for the Karmācārya. These Ācāḥju, who normally have to be initiated by Karmācārya Tantric priests, direct almost all the funeral ceremonies and act as local priests.

3. The **Jośī**. Like the Karmācārya, the astrologers Jośī belong to the large group of people called Chatharīya and Śreṣṭha. They participate in the ceremony performed on the thirteenth day after the cremation, a *śrāddha* during which the malevolent ghost spirit of the departed is transformed into an auspicious ancestral spirit, protector of the lineage. It is the equivalent of the Hindu ritual *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* (lit.: 'to make the dead *sapiṇḍa*'), the word *sapiṇḍa* designating the group formed by relatives on paternal and maternal lines over seven generations (ego's generation included). The Jośī attends the *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* along with a Brāhmaṇ and a Karmācārya. His role is quite unimportant: he only has to light up lamps,

6 For instance, in Pyangaon; cf. Toffin (1984: 150-151).

pay homage to divinities and assist the Karmācārya, who is in charge of the ceremony. In the village of Pyangaon, the Jośī is invited (in fact, used to be invited, for this custom has become obsolete) only for the ritual commemorating the first annual anniversary of the death and for the *sora śrāddha* of Āśvin.

4. The **Tīnī** (or Tīncā, Tīnīju, Śivācārya). The members of this caste are concentrated in the eastern part of the Kathmandu Valley. They are supposed formerly to have been Brāhmaṇ. Some of them act as servants of gods in temples, but their main function is connected with funerals. As a matter of fact, Tīnī are first of all funeral priests. They are in charge of the *ghaḥsū* (Nep. *ghar śānti)*, a ritual of purification which concludes the polluting period for the distant relatives and which is held on the twelfth day after the cremation.[7] It takes place on the first floor of the house of the deceased, on the very spot where the corpse had been placed before being carried to the funeral pyre. Generally, they attend this ceremony as assistants of the Brāhmaṇ. However, in some cases, they may officiate alone. When the two categories of priests are present, the Tīnī, facing west, pours some paddy, rice, sesame seeds, barley, clarified butter and a particular kind of paddy called *swāṃwā* into the sacred fire, while the Brāhmaṇ reads ritual texts. When the *homa* is at the point of being concluded, the Tīnī sprinkles sacred water on the chief mourner. Traditionally, the Tīnī also officiate at all the funeral ceremonies of Bhāḥ's caste (see infra). In a sense, they are the regular family priests *(purohita)* of this caste.

5. The **Jyāpu** (or Suwāl, Kisān, Maharjan). This farmer caste represents one of the largest sections of Newar society. Its members have three particular functions to fulfil during the funerals of high Hindu (and Buddhist) castes. First, an old Jyāpu woman has to scatter flattened rice and husk from the house of the deceased up to the outskirts of the settlement just ahead the corpse. This ritual is called *pu hwalegu* in Newar.[8] As a rule, the Jyāpu also have to erect the funeral pyre in the cremation ground *(maśān)* and to burn the corpse. When the cremation is totally completed, they collect some ash from the pyre and throw it into the river. They also offer some rice to the crows, to the spirit of the deceased, and to the

7 The *ghaḥsū* sometimes takes place ten days after the cremation, on the very day of the purificatory ceremony. High-caste Buddhists perform *ghaḥsū* seven days after the cremation (Nepali 1965: 138).

8 Among the Jyāpu and pure castes of high status, it is a married daughter of the deceased, generally the oldest one, who performs the *pu hwalegu* (or *po hwalegu, wā hwalegu*) ritual.

goddess Kumārī. In some places, a sub-caste of Jyāpu called Gwā is specifically in charge of these despised functions.[9] Finally, the Jyāpu often have to throw a plate containing rice, flowers, incense and some ash of the corpse in various *tīrtha* of the Kathmandu Valley and, in theory at least, even along the Ganges in India.[10] In some settlements (Lalitpur and Kathmandu, for instance), the members of the Jyāpu section have to fulfil a fourth function during the funerals of high-caste individuals: they have to play a distinctive musical instrument (aerophone) called *kāhāṃ* (or *kāhāḥ, kāhā)* at the head of the funeral procession. It is a narrow, slender, straight trumpet, which, due to its length (between 150 and 170 cm), requires an additional support made of wood or bamboo. The instrument is always played in pairs by two performers. To simplify its transport, it is made of several sections which can be fitted into one another.[11] The sub-caste which plays such a trumpet is called Kāhāḥbūjā, or Kāhāpu, or Kārbujā. In Kathmandu, these persons are ranked below other Jyāpu.[12]

6. The **Nau** (or Nāpit). The barbers Nau shave the hair, the eyebrows and the beard of the close relatives of the deceased ten days after cremation, just before the purification ceremony called *du byēkegu*.[13] As for the barber's wife, she has to cut the toenails of the female relatives of the deceased or symbolically touch their feet with her knife *(lusi thikegu)* as a sign of purification. The same operations are repeated, in theory, 45 days, six months, and one year after the funeral for the successive *śrāddha* ceremonies.

7. The **Sāymi** (or Mānandhar). As quoted in the chronicle mentioned in

9 The Jyāpu themselves sometimes appoint Gwā (or Gō) to cremate the corpse; cf. Toffin (1984: 146-147).

10 Nepali (1965: 133) stated that two persons are sent to Gokarna with the 'scalp' of the corpse, two others to Sankhamul with one of the shoulder joints, 'one to Tekdwan [Tekhu Dobhān] with the other shoulder joint and the sixth person, first to Lakha Tirtha and then to Bhaca-Khusi with the knee-caps'. Those places are all *tīrtha* of the Kathmandu Valley.

11 Concerning the *kāhāṃ* trumpet, cf. Wiehler-Schneider and Wiehler (1980: 114). It is played not only during funerals, but also on festive occasions or during the most solemn moments of temple ceremonies.

12 The Kāhāḥbūjā musicians are often considered a specific caste, separate from the Jyāpu; see, for instance, Riccardi (1975: 204) and Oldfield (1880: 185). Hodgson, on the contrary, stated they were a subdivision of Jyāpu agriculturists (quoted by Chattopadhyay 1980: 93). According to Oldfield (1880: 185), the Kāhāḥbūjā play on their musical instrument *(kāhāṃ)* only during funerals.

13 In Pyangaon, the barber officiates on the *ghaḥsū* day which is celebrated in that village on the thirteenth day after cremation.

the beginning of this chapter, the oil-pressers Sāymi participate in the funerals of high-caste persons as musicians. They play a straight trumpet called *pwāgā*, which is slightly shorter than the *kāhāṃ* already described (80 to 90 cm in length) but similar to it in all other aspects. Depending on the locality, sometimes oil-pressers, sometimes Kāhāḥbūjā (and also Khusaḥ or Putuwār, see infra) play this trumpet.[14]

8. The **Pulu** (or Pulpulu, Dipakār).[15] The members of this caste, which numbered only 34 households in the entire Kathmandu Valley (personal census, 1978), bear torches in front of the funeral procession. Their name, Pulu, derives from *pulpul*, which means 'light which goes up and down'. In theory, one torch has to be carried for each married daughter of the house of the departed, and it is the sons-in-law who have to provide it. The Pulu also play small cymbals called *tāṃ* and sometimes even a bell, *ghaṇṭā*, at the crossing of roads to warn others that a funeral procession is coming. The meeting of two funeral processions at a road crossing is considered one of the most inauspicious events and one of the worst omens. Everything is done to prevent such a thing from happening.[16] Sometimes, the Putuwār take the Pulu's place to carry the torches.

9. The **Khusaḥ** (or Khusal, Taṇḍukār). This caste, which specialises in processing rice, in stucco work and in weaving, also has the task of performing during funerals. In some localities (Kirtipur, for instance), its members play the trumpet *kāhāṃ* in the front of the funeral procession, taking the place of the Jyāpu and of the Mānandhar oil-pressers.[17]

10. The **Bhāḥ** (or Kārāmjit). It is said that the members of this caste originally belonged to the Brāhmaṇ caste. They are frequently called Pretabrāhmaṇ or Mahābrāhmaṇ, a widely-known expression in North India. As funeral priests, they participate in the *śrāddha* which are performed daily during the ten days following the cremation. The rituals take place on public land near a river. A Brāhmaṇ and the chief mourner *(mitaymhā)*, generally the son of the departed, also attend the ceremonies. On the first day, the Bhāḥ models a small *liṅga* with clay and a little

14 Cf. Hoerburger (1971: 10).

15 It seems that in Bhaktapur the Dipakār funeral torch-bearers are called Cālaṃ; cf. Gutschow and Kölver (1975: 57). These Cālaṃ are described by Chattopadhyay (1980: 100) in the following terms: 'Musicians who attend when dead bodies are taken to be buried.'

16 According to Hodgson, the Pulu carry an earthen lamp in a small basket as well as a bell, at the head of the funeral procession; Chattopadhyay (1980: 98). Regmi (1965: 674) says that in Bhaktapur the Pulu are called Maki.

17 Regmi (1965: 674) notes: 'In mediaeval times, they [the Khusaḥ] used to play *kāhāṃ* instrument for the funeral'.

water. This *liṅga* represents Hatakeśvar Mahādev. In the following days, the Bhāḥ assists the Brāhmaṇ. It is his duty to wash the rice which is offered to the spirit of the departed and to pour water on the *liṅga*. A clay pot with a hole in the bottom is attached to a tripod of sticks so that the water drips steadily over Hatakeśvar Mahādev. On the tenth day (sometimes on the eleventh) after the death, a Bhāḥ pays a visit to the family of the deceased and has to accept a dish called *kāṭṭo* specially prepared for him. This dish consists of ten small leaf plates (one for each day of the *kriyā)* containing beaten and flattened rice, honey, clarified butter and sesame seeds. A piece of the skull of the dead person, mashed into thin powder, is said to be mixed with these ingredients. The Bhāḥ has to eat a little of this dish in front of the relatives of the deceased. In Newar, this ritual visit is called *cipa thihigu* (or *cipa thikegu)*: 'to pollute by eating', or *kāṭṭo nakegu*, 'to feed with *kāṭṭo*'. The Bhāḥ accepts this offering with considerable difficulty, and it is necessary to give him money so that he takes the *kāṭṭo* to his house. This ritual is intended to expel the ghost spirit of the deceased from its former abode and to introduce it to the Bhāḥ. The daughters of the family bring the Bhāḥ back to his house and make sure that he does not look back behind him, a gesture which could entail fatal consequences. Sometimes on that same day, the Bhāḥ also receives most of the clothes, tools and vessels used by the deceased during his lifetime.[18]

11. The **Putuwār** (or Dwīṃ). This caste of former palanquin bearers has four specific duties to perform during the funerals of high Hindu (and Buddhist) castes. 1) First of all, as mentioned earlier, they often replace the Pulu at the head of the funeral procession, carrying torches. 2) In some localities (Lubhu and Sankhu, for instance), they also have to play the *kāhāṃ* trumpet, taking the place of the Jyāpu and the Mānandhar. 3) After the funeral pyre has been lighted, a Putuwār stands at the entrance of the house of the deceased and purifies the mourners coming back from the cremation ground with a fumigation of cotton and mustard seeds. The relatives must not enter the house until the ritual of purification (and of expulsion of evil spirits) *(lā suigu)* has been performed. The Putuwār then throws the seeds used during the ceremony at a crossroad located on the boundary line of the settlement. 4) Finally, on

18 According to some informants, in some cases, the Bhāḥ should perform a *śrāddha* ceremony on the same day of the funeral near the cremation pyre. It is reported that Brāhmaṇs should attend this ritual.

the seventh day after the death, a Putuwār has to rebuild the fireplace in the mourning house which would have been destroyed on the day of the cremation.

12. The **Nāy** (or Kasāi, Khaḍgī). In some settlements, urban and rural, the Nāy butchers play on the drum *nāykhīṃ* (a word derived from the name of their caste) and small cymbals (called *khaicā* in Panauti) during the funeral procession of Jyāpu farmers. It is the sons-in-law of the deceased who invite the butchers and who have to compensate them for their services. Though this does not concern the dominant castes, it must be said that the butchers take the place of the barbers and cut the toenails of the mourning relatives when the caste of the dead person is of a low status. Moreover, the butcher's wife throws away a basket containing the clothes worn by the deceased at the time of his death and several articles belonging to him during his lifetime at a crossroad *(chwāsa)*. Sometimes, the daughters-in-law are in charge of this. In both cases, these belongings must be thrown away before the funeral procession reaches the cremation ground.

13. The **Kusle** (or Jugi, Kāpālī). The tailors-musicians, who descended from the ascetics of the Kānphaṭa Yogī sect, and who nowadays are reintegrated into the world of castes, must accept a plate of boiled rice, soyabean and pulse prepared by the family of the deceased on the seventh day after the cremation *(nhaynhūmā)*. In most cases, a small Kusle girl goes and takes this food. Some sweet-balls are added for her. The offering, called *jugi bau*, is given in the name of the deceased and is intended to ward off the ghost form of the departed. The Jugi must accept the plate, for they represent the spirit of the deceased on that day. This ritual is called *cipa thihigu,* like the one the Bhāḥ has to perform on the tenth day after death. In the village of Pyangaon, on the thirteenth day, the Kusle receives a piece of cloth taken from the garments of the dead person.

14. The **Poḍe** (or Dyaḥlā). Nowadays, this caste of fishermen and sweepers, one of the lowest among the impure castes *(majyūpīṃ)*, has no specific religious task to fulfil during the funerals of high Hindu castes. However, the Poḍe were formerly responsible for the cremation of the corpse.[19] The Poḍe also provide small baskets which are used for the food offerings given to the Kusle on the *nhaynhūmā* ceremony. Moreover, in some cases, the fishermen take the clothing and bedding of the

19 Cf. Hodgson, Hodgson papers (unpublished), n.d., London. Indian Office Library, vol. 9.

deceased. In that context, they are strongly associated with particularly impure and dangerous substances.

Two other castes, which have today disappeared or are in the process of extinction, had formerly to perform religious obligations during the time of funerals. First, the Tāti (or Twātī) had to weave a piece of cloth called *pwa gā* which was used to wrap the dead body.[20] Ten days after the cremation, the Pasi (or Pasicā) washed a cloth called *nakāpa* with which the head of the corpse was covered at the time of the death. It seems that the close agnatic relatives of the deceased also covered their heads with this *nakāpa* cloth for ten days after the day of the cremation.[21]

The funerals as a 'total social fact'

A large number of castes (though not all) thus have distinctive religious functions to fulfil during the funeral of a person belonging to the dominant castes. It is the life-cycle ceremony which mobilises the greatest number of ritual specialists coming from different castes. Among some Jyāpu peasants, e.g., the Swāgumi of Pyangaon, it is the only life-cycle rite for which it is compulsory to invite a Brāhmaṇ priest. Similar to the communal festivals *(deś jātrā)* celebrated at different times by each Newar town and village, funerals are strategic events which entail a maximal intensification of social relations and which involve the whole society. To quote a Maussian expression, they are a 'fait social total'.[22]

Apparently, there are few differences in that matter between Hindu and Buddhist castes. Nearly the same division of religious activities is to found among both groups. Nevertheless, the Buddhist castes are characterised by less specialisation as far as funeral priests are concerned. It also should

20 The Tāti also weave the sacred thread of the twice-born and the clothes of certain gods. Oldfield (1880: 186) asserts that members of this caste ('Tatti') weave a cloth in cotton wool to cover the dead and night-caps for infants' heads when their hair is first cut off. Hodgson adds that the *pwāgā* (or *pau gā)* cloth woven by Tati ['Tatee'] is used as clothing by certain servants of Matsyendranāth at the time of performing services, by Newars who adopt Buddhism and by *sati* widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pyre (quoted by Chattopadhyay, 1980: 98). In contrast with Oldfield and Regmi, Hodgson considers the Tāti to be a subsection of Jyāpu agriculturists. Concerning the *pau gā* cloth during male initiation ceremony *(kaytā pūjā)*, cf. Toffin (1984: 134).

21 Cf. Regmi (1965: 676). For Bhaktapur, Gutschow and Kölver (1975: 57) give the name of a specific caste: the Phasīkha (=Pasi?), or Chyo, whose duty is 'to give fire to the pyre'.

22 Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), a great figure of French anthropology, professor of social anthropology in Collège de France, was the nephew and disciple of Emile Durkheim, the renowned sociologist.

be noted that Gubhāju priests perform some rituals such as *ghaḥsū*, that a Brāhmaṇ would not perform for his followers without being defiled.[23]

In an earlier article (Toffin 1982*b*), I emphasised that communal festivals are of particular relevance to Newar society, for they often correspond to a critical moment in the annual calendar: the passage from one season to another; temporary absence of gods or of one deity; etc. The first aim of such festive rituals is to dramatise this critical moment and to repair the cosmic order. In other cases, communal festivals can be understood as a return to the primeval mythical time of the origins. They re-enact the crucial transition between the chaotic condition of nature and the ordered state of culture. These ritual re-enactments of the act of creation and foundation of settlements thus emphasise the cosmogonic renewal of the locality and of society. They entail a rejuvenation of the social-cosmical order, a moment in danger.

What about funerals? From where do they derive their pivotal place in religious and social life? In all cultures, death is conceived as a particularly dramatic event which threatens the close relatives of the deceased and, in a sense, the society as a whole. The event is particularly dramatic when the deceased happens to be the king himself or a local chief, for, in that case, the cosmic order itself (of which the ruler is the pillar) is temporarily in danger of disintegration. The huge funeral procession that Jayasthiti Malla is asserted to have installed for royal death ceremonies can be viewed as a giant demonstration of the indestructibility of hierarchy in the face of the destructive forces of death. Among the Newar, as among most Indianised groups of South Asia, death is also an extremely polluting event. For some reason or another, it deeply defiles the relatives and those who come into contact with the corpse. To remove this pollution and ward off the dangers represented by the spirit of the deceased, numerous religious specialists are required. In my view, a third element also has to be taken into account: Newars, as Gurungs, Tamangs, Thakalis and other Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnic groups of the hills of Nepal, are societies of death (Chapter 9). They express their most important ideas about their society through funerals. A study of death rituals and of the role played in it by their different segments contains most of the conceptions underlying the functioning principles of their social structure.

23 Some groups of families, such as the Nikhu of Lalitpur, employ a Gubhāju priest to perform *ghaḥsū* and a Brāhmaṇ priest for subsequent funeral rituals.

What is most striking in the organisation of these funerals are the extensive functional interrelations which come into play between the castes at that time. Brāhmaṇ, Karmācārya, Jośī, Tīnī, Jyāpu, Nau, Putuwār, Bhāḥ, Sāymi, Pulu, Khusaḥ, Nāy, Kusle, Poḍe, all participate in the death ceremonies and have ritual functions to fulfil. As communal festivals, funerals are based, so to speak, on a deep division of liturgic duties. This is an outstanding feature of the Newar caste system as a whole; these castes are characterised in relation to one another as much by their professional occupations as by their religious obligations. It is even possible to assert that in such a society, the social roles derive from the organisation of ritual activities.

On which structural principles is this division of ritual functions based? Like any other local system in Hindu South Asia, the Newar caste organisation of the Kathmandu Valley—a very complete system indeed in comparison to the Parbatiyā's—is rooted in the dichotomy between pure and impure. The highest castes in the hierarchy are the purest, the lowest castes are the most impure. The status of the intermediary castes is fixed by numerous criteria relating in all cases to this pervading distinction (Toffin 1984: 277-306). The low castes are impure because their profession and religious obligations involve contact with organic substances which are viewed as highly polluting. Due to their activity, for instance, the Nāy and the Putuwār (the wives of the latter are midwives) are occasionally in touch with blood from women during delivery. Likewise, the barbers Nau (and the butchers Nāy) are associated with hair and nails, two organic substances which become polluted as soon as they are removed from the human body. In addition, some castes are in contact with the corpse. This is the case of the Gwā agriculturists who must burn the corpse of the deceased, and of the Bhāḥ funeral priests who have to eat a portion of the skull. These close and repeated contacts with impure substances entail a low rank in the hierarchy. And if the fishermen (Poḍe) have such a despised status, it is most probably because they were formerly public executioners of persons condemned to death. Opposition between the categories of purity and impurity is the cornerstone of the entire Newar society. It encompasses the prohibitions of contact, marriage and commensality, and determines the contrast between the diet of the high priest caste, in theory vegetarian, and the diet of the other castes (meat-eaters and alcohol-drinkers). It can be considered an all-pervading principle, explaining the hierarchy in its Hindu specificity from a global point of view.

The particular position of the dominant castes in relation to the religious specialists points to another prevalent distinction in Newar society, i.e., between the sacrificer, *yajamāna* (pronounced *jemān* in Newar) and the Brāhmaṇ priest; in other words, between the patron, the one who organises the sacrifice, and the one who performs the solemn rituals. Among Hindu Newars, as in traditional Hindu society, this dichotomy is adjusted to the relation between Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya. The former is the specialist of ritual Vedic texts, the guardian of sacred science, the repository of the knowledge of *dharma,* the ultimate authority on religious affairs. The latter represents the king, the warriors, the military, and he has a peculiar affinity with all matters pertaining to material goods, and economic or political action. Their relationship is complementary: a priest must have a patron, a patron must have priests. But the first one is superior to the second. It is their common sacrificial activity, performed regularly according to prescription, which sustains the cosmic and social order, and ensures the prosperity of the kingdom.

It should be noted that the *yajamāna*, i.e., the king, the directing body of the realm, and the dominant castes controlling the local power, are central in the socio-religious system. The *yajamāna* sacrificer employs different ritual specialists and compensates them. All the other castes revolve around him. The Brāhmaṇ's funeral, for instance, does not have this striking feature of being a microcosm of society, which is expressed during the death ceremonies of dominant castes. The lower castes, on the other hand, employ a limited number of priests, themselves of inferior status, for high rank priests are not supposed to officiate in the ritual ceremonies of these families. Among these extreme groups, Brāhmaṇs and low castes, certain categories of relatives—the sister's son in particular—frequently assume a quasi-priestly function.[24]

Priests and funerals

As Arthur M. Hocart demonstrated in his insightful and seminal essay,[25] the caste system is a sacrificial organisation and caste is a sacerdoce. Each caste has a peculiar ritual function to perform, and a caste specialist is a ritual specialist. When a man performs his caste-determined occupation, he is, in fact, behaving like a priest. This theory applies very well to

24 This, for instance, seems to be the case of the Putuwār; see Nepali (1965: 174). Parbatiyā also employ the son-in-law or sister's son to fulfil priestly functions; cf. Bennett (1983: 148).
25 Hocart (1938: 27-29).

the Kathmandu Valley. Among the Newar, nearly all the castes have a precise religious content and have some sacred obligations to fulfil for such and such celebration or for the cult of such and such god. These ritual functions are distributed according to a fixed order. They form a global system in which the notion of hierarchy prevails.

Let us first examine the funeral priests who officiate in all *śrāddha* ceremonies. According to tradition, the Jośī, Karmācārya, Tīnī and Bhāḥ were originally Brāhmaṇs. The Karmācārya are supposed to have been degraded because they did not follow the Brahmanic way of life correctly and because they married Śreṣṭha women (Nepali 1965: 177). The Jośī are thought to be the descendants of Brāhmaṇ widows (*idem:* 157)—like Jaisī Bāhun among Parbatiyās. Some say that they intermarried with Newar women of low rank. Similary, I collected a legend among the Tīnī of Bhaktapur according to which the Bhāḥ and the Tīnī have been degraded from their Brahmanic status because they performed certain inauspicious rituals. The legend indicates that once upon a time a Newar king requested the service of a Brāhmaṇ priest (Rājopādhyāya) from Kanyakubja (=Kanauj) in India, to celebrate the familial ceremonies of the court. When he arrived in the small valley of Chitlang, just south of the Kathmandu Valley, this Brāhmaṇ priest died. His four sons distributed among themselves the different religious duties to be performed for funerals. The eldest, as chief mourner, accomplished *kriyā*, the second ate a piece of the skull of the corpse *(kāṭṭo)*, the third performed the *ghaḥsū* ritual of purification and pacification, and the youngest acted as the family priest *(purohita)*. Among these four sons, only the eldest and the youngest retained their status of Brāhmaṇs. The second is the ancestor of the Bhā, and the third of the Tīnī.

Karmācāryas, Jośīs, Tīnīs and Bhāḥs are thus priests of lower rank. They recognise, at least in theory, the superiority of the Brāhmaṇ, the highest sacerdotal caste within society. The differentiation between higher and lower priests during funerals is mainly due to the fact that Karmācāryas, Jośīs, Tīnīs and Bhāḥs come into contact with the inauspicious and dangerous ghost spirit, *preta,* of the dead person during these ceremonies. The Brāhmaṇ could not officiate in these rituals without being polluted. When he infringes upon the interdiction, he automatically loses his rank, which rests on the strict observation of purity rules. In fact, as long as the *preta* has not been changed symbolically into a benevolent ancestor, *pitar* (or *pitṛ)*, the Brāhmaṇ is set aside, he just reads texts and does not directly interfere with the ritual. The funeral priests of lower

status handle the oblations, light the lamps, etc. The Brāhmaṇ becomes active in the ceremony only after the *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*, which marks the transformation of the deceased from a disembodied ghost, *preta*, to an ancestral spirit, *pitar*.

By participating in the funeral ceremonies of *daś kriyā*, as well as those of the twelfth and thirteenth day, the Karmācārya, Jośī, Tīnī and Bhāḥ priests not only propitiate the *preta,* they also incarnate it in some way. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the Bhāḥ, who rank lower among those priests and who are appropriately called Pretabrāhmaṇ in that context. It should be recalled that according to the classical Hindu scheme, the priest represents the spirit of the deceased during *śrāddha.* He even has to eat some of the food offered to the *preta*, unlike the sacrifice to the gods where the divinities are fed directly (Malamoud 1982: 45). When *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* is finished, the Brāhmaṇ may represent the protecting ancestor and act as an intermediary, as a vehicle of the offering.

This fundamental distinction also explains why the Brāhmaṇ does not accept any ritual fee *(dakṣiṇā)* until the *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* has been performed. During that interval, the gifts are given to inferior priests, such as the *kāṭṭo nakegu* offering, also called *pret śayyā*, which the Bhāḥ must accept on the tenth (or eleventh) day after death. Only after the thirteenth day ceremony can the Brāhmaṇ accept gifts *(dān)*. They receive the *śayyā dān*, literally, 'the gift of the bed', which consists, as Newars say, of all the articles a man needs for life: bedding, clothing, vessels, *hukā*, etc. In theory, the Brāhmaṇ is also given a cow (but only if the deceased is a male) to serve as a guide to the spirit of the departed on its way to the next world and to help it to cross the river of flood and filth called Vaitaraṇī, which flows between the earth and the abode of Yama *(yamaloka)*.[26]

The *kāṭṭo nakegu* taken by the Bhāḥ on the tenth day, and in which a piece of the skull is mixed, deserves particular discussion. It is a compulsory ritual on which everybody insists. It is obviously not by chance that the Bhāḥ are often nicknamed *khappar*, 'skull'. In the Hindu world, necrophagy is usually linked with bad spirits, demons of the *rākṣasa* or *daitya* type, which are fond of human flesh and steal it from around cremation grounds. This habit is also reported among some ascetics. Aghoris, for instance, are said to eat putrid flesh of dead bodies by scav-

26 As is well known, this custom also exists in India; cf. Gonda (1962: 159) and Stevenson (1971: 140-141).

enging on the cremation *ghāṭ* (Parry 1982: 86). Nevertheless, I think that in the present case the explanation must be sought elsewhere. A parallel with India contains certain indications on that matter. In his book on the popular religion of Malwa in central India, Babb (1975: 97) indicates that on the last day of the mourning, local Mahābrāhmaṇ must eat a *khir* (boiled rice and milk) which has the form of a human body. This funeral priest starts eating it from the feet, and ends with the head. He complains that he will not be able to finish it, but he is encouraged by the relatives who give him some money. Now Babb adds: 'It is said that in eating the *khir,* the Mahābrāhmaṇ is removing the last traces of the deceased from this world, and is providing him with substance for a body in the next' *(idem:* 97). This belief obviously corresponds to the Newar custom under discussion. In India, as in Nepal, the Mahābrāhmaṇ's first task is to absorb the last remains of the corpse and to provide a body for the *preta.* Moreover, such a ritual is also practised among Parbatiyās. The Brāhmaṇ who had to eat the *kāṭṭo*[27] of the Shah royal family (and, as it seems, also of the Ranas) is called *kāṭṭo khāna bāhun.* After accepting this portion of the corpse, he received numerous gifts and was expelled from the Kathmandu Valley mounted on an elephant,[28] a crown on his head, as if he were the deceased king himself. This priest is extremely inauspicious and the people used to throw stones in his direction when they saw him.[29]

Let us now consider those religious specialists who do not participate in *śrāddha* ceremonies, but who nevertheless have particular ritual obligations to fulfil during funerals. Some of them, such as the barbers, the Putuwār (and partially the Nāys) play the role of purifiers: they remove the impurity caused by death. But most of these specialists (and this seems to be their main function) have to play musical instruments and act as musicians (see Table 4). This is the case of the Kāhāḥbūjā (=Jyāpu), Sāymi, Pulu, Khusaḥ, Putuwār and Nāy. Among the instruments, the *kāhāṃ* trumpet is the most frequent. That is not to say that this trumpet is a typical funeral musical instrument, but the tune played at the time of

27 *Kāṭṭo* is a Nepali word. Turner (1931: 85) translates it by: 'The oblations offered on the 11th day after the death.' B.C. Sharma (1962: 170), says more precisely: *mareko eghāraī dinmā mṛtako uddeśyale khuwāine anna ra diine māl-māttā*, transl.: 'On the eleventh day after death, according to the will of the departed, to feed and to give goods.'

28 The elephant (and horse) are royal animals, as the cow is a Brahmanic one.

29 Leuchtag (1958: 235-36) states that at the time of King Tribhuvan's death, this 'demon' Brāhmaṇ rode backwards on the elephant. Burghart (1984: 105) gives the name 'Mahapatra' for this funeral priest.

Table 4. **Musical instrument played by different castes during funerals**

Kāhāḥbūjā (=Jyāpu)	*kāhāṃ* trumpet
Sāymi	*pwāgā* (or *kāhāṃ*) trumpet
Pulu	*ta* (or *taḥ*) cymbals and *ghaṇṭā* bell
Khusaḥ	*kāhāṃ* trumpet
Putuwār	*kāhāṃ* trumpet
Nāy	*nāykhīṃ* drum and cymbals (called *khaicā* in Panauti)

the mortuary procession is peculiar both to such an instrument and to funerals. As noted above, blasts from that trumpet warn others that an inauspicious cortège is coming. The *kāhāṃ* also seems to drive away the evil spirits from the corpse; the musicians need to play it at each crossroad, such a place being a favourite abode for all these threatening spirits. Musicians are thus in close contact with demons, a fact that entails their low status.[30]

Like the Bhāḥ, the Kusle, for their part, incarnate the ghost form of the deceased and have the obligation to accept the offerings presented to it. The identification between Kusle and *preta* is so perfect that the female relatives of the deceased must cry bitterly, as if the dead person were departing for the second time, when the tailor-musician takes the food which is presented to him on the seventh day after death.[31] This ritual specialist obviously plays the role of a scapegoat on these occasions. It should be added that the Kusle are also the familial, hereditary priests of the Putuwār, although this caste is ranked above them in the hierarchy. This paradoxical situation has to be attributed to the ascetic tradition the Kusle still keep alive in some areas of their social and religious life.

Conclusion

There is a pronounced contrast between the Newar and the Parbatiyā as far as the organisation of sacerdotal functions is concerned. Among the former, priestly obligations during mortuary rituals are distributed according to caste. Among the latter, they are divided mainly according to

30 Among the Parbatiyās of high castes, a conch-shell is blown by a Brāhmaṇ on the way to the funeral pyre; cf. Bouillier (1979: 139).

31 Cf. Nepali (1965: 136). According to this author, nowadays the Kusle, as substitutes for the Bhāḥ, accept *kāṭṭo* offering (*idem*: 140). I could not check this assertion.

kinship ties: the sister's son and the son-in-law are very often appointed to perform the role of the Brāhmaṇ.[32] As a matter of fact, it seems that in Newar society the sacerdotal function is quite separate from kinship. On the contrary, among the Parbatiyā and in Hindu North India kinship is dominated by caste rules; the social system in its totality, including kin groups, is encompassed by the principle of hierarchy.

Let us return to Newar society itself. The differentiation between superior and inferior priests which has been emphasised in this chapter is not restricted to funerals. It pervades the whole religious life of Newars. Accordingly, it is possible to distinguish three major types of priests in that society, each type being related to a particular group of divinities.

The Brāhmaṇ, who are at the apex of the caste hierarchy, propitiate the purest gods of the Hindu pantheon, the ones corresponding to the ultimate values of *dharma*. These are Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, and their vegetarian, gentle, benevolent *(śānti)* wives: Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Pārvatī. These divinities do not accept blood sacrifices *(hi matwā dyaḥ)* and alcohol. They are mainly offered vegetables and some products from the cow (such as milk), an epitome of purity in Hinduism.

The Karmācārya, and in some cases the Jośi and the Tīnī, are the servants of divinities who drink the blood of animals *(hi twā dyaḥ)* and accept alcohol. These figures are the terrible *(ugra)* and awesome aspects of the gods of the first category. Among them, one can mention: Bhairava, Durgā, Bhīmasena (=Bhimsen), the numerous goddesses of the Newar pantheon and most of the Āgamic divinities. All these divine figures are principally concerned with the material, concrete interests of human beings. They are much more associated with the general prosperity of the settlement and with the permanence of lineage groups than are the highest gods such as Viṣṇu and Śiva.

The Bhāḥ, Kusle, etc, have close affinities with evil spirits, *bhūt-pret*. These beings are driven away at intervals from houses and settlements where they cause disorder and illness. They are offered filthy and particularly inauspicious substances, such as polluted clothes, sweepings from the house, husk (as opposed to grain), etc. Most of these inferior ritual specialists are closely linked with the cremation grounds, such as the Poḍe, whose houses are located near the funeral sites. The evil spirits share the same abode and certain religious elements with the gods of the second category. This explains why the Karmācārya, the Jośī and the Tīnī often

32 Cf. Bennett(1983: 148).

come into contact with them, as was manifested during funeral rituals.

It is true that some Brāhmaṇs, versed in Tantrism, are the servants of blood-thirty goddesses. But these are the exception. Generally, Brāhmaṇs delegate their priestly functions related to Tantrism to a Karmācārya or to another category of inferior priests. It is, in fact, difficult for them to participate directly in Tantric rituals; these ceremonies includes animal sacrifices and alcohol offerings which endanger their purity. They need intermediary technical assistants to play this role.

This typology of sacerdotal functions is undoubtedly just a simplification of a very complex set of relationships between men and gods. A more detailed study would serve to correct, to some extent, the previous picture. We did not, for instance, consider the various healers and exorcists *(dyaḥ waikipīṃ, baiddye, phū phāḥyāypīṃ)* who play an important role, often underestimated, in Newar religion. Moreover, these specialists ordinarily have no specific task to fulfil during mortuary rituals: they are in charge of pacifying the ghost form of the deceased only if this spirit happens to become too dangerous and poses a serious threat to living beings. Our main concern in this work was simply to stress the strong homology which exists between the structure of the society and the structure of the pantheon. Schematically, the relationship between the vegetarian gods and the meat-eating gods is parallel to the relationship between the Brāhmaṇ and inferior priests. Likewise, the evil spirits are in the same relation with the vegetarian gods as low status priests are with Brāhmaṇs. The two orders, social and religious, are based on common hierarchical structures, the dichotomy between purity and impurity playing a fundamental role in both cases.

12

Constructing Identity in a Changing Context

The Jyāpu Mahāguthi

In sociology as well as in anthropology, the notion of identity acquires some significance only when viewed as a construction and not as a substance. There is no identity per se, intrinsically, but various operations bestowing on an individual or a group a series of qualities and characteristics. In other words, an ethnic identity (or ethnicity)—the kind of feeling and links we are dealing with in this book—has to be created. It is not transmitted unchanged from generation to generation, as an essential and universal aspect of the human condition. Ethnic groups cannot be said to be sociocultural collectivities with species-like (i.e., 'natural') characteristics. They do not constitute totally bounded discrete groups. They are, for the most part, to be understood in relation to other groups.

This chapter investigates how Jyāpu peasants of the Kathmandu Valley have been forging a new identity from 1992 onward with the creation of a wide-ranging caste organisation: the Jyāpu Mahāguthi. Such a process, which implies the reconstruction of an imagined past, exemplifies a widespread development among the Newar castes in the post-1990 period following the overthrow of the Panchayat system. It directly ad-

---

Previously unpublished. An initial presentation of the material assembled in this chapter first saw the light at a conference held in Leipzig under the direction of Alexander V. Rospatt in 2003. I owe special thanks to Madhav Maharjan, Raj Bhai Jakami, Bipendra Maharjan, and Chiri Bhai Maharjan (Phulcok, Lalitpur) for their help during the time of my research.

dresses the question of the transformation of the social structure, more particularly the caste system, over the last decade. By and large, this case study presents a dynamic view of Newar society, in reaction to the purely static and structurally closed models that were prevalent some years ago, especially in France.

A noteworthy point to stress beforehand is that a collective identity never constitutes a homogenous entity. It is the result of three different processes: the self-ascription of the social grouping concerned; the self-images and self-representations it projects to other people; and, finally, the way others designate or perceive this body. When the results of these three different processes coincide more or less, a very muted feeling of its own identity arises in the group. On the other hand, if an important dissonance arises, the collective body is obliged to undertake a considerable effort of representation directed towards the outsider. Little attempt has been made to explore how such trends and pulls coexist and interact with each other. A primary purpose of the social scientist is therefore to analyse the outcome and the configuration of these three different processes.

Ethnic and caste identity among the Newar

The Newar of the Kathmandu Valley are of particular interest with respect to identity formation, since two distinct processes are combined within the group: one is related to the overall ethnic community, the other to the various castes into which the Newar-speaking population is divided. In both cases, identity depends heavily on specific historical contexts and is to be viewed in relation to other surrounding ethnic groups with which the Newar have close relations.[1]

Let us first consider the sense of belonging to a specific ethnic community, i.e., the Newar. Since when have this body of people openly expressed an attachment to the same common group and started calling themselves Newar (or Newāḥ, Newāḥpīṃ)? Interestingly, 'Newar' as a self-ascribed ethnonym is a relatively new term. It is attested to only from the mid-17th century.[2] The name derives from the geographical

1 There is already a great deal of literature concerning Newar identity. See especially Gellner (1986 and 1997).

2 According to Gellner (1986: 140), the first precisely datable occurrence of the word 'Newar' is in 1642, 'when it is used as the name of the language *newāra bhāṣā*', i.e., Newar. Newar is first used with a clear ethnic connotation in 1684 (*ibid.*). Regmi (1969: 14) gives the date as 1653. Malla (1982: 2) gives 1652.

word *nepāḥ*, originally used to designate the Kathmandu Valley. What has happened here is a process of ethnicisation of a culturally and economically highly differentiated group of people, who had initially different origins but settled in one specific region, the Kathmandu Valley. They then started to adopt the same language *(nepāḥ* or *newāḥ bhāy)*, spoken locally since very ancient times (as far back as the records go), the same cultural features, and the same civilisation. 'The term "Newar" is not a racial term, but a cultural one, denoting the very rich and complex culture of the society of the Valley. It denotes a people who speak a common language, Newar, and who share a common but diverse culture' (Locke 1989: 71-7). The threat of the Gorkha chiefdom to the west, with its distinct population, the Parbatiyā *(Khayṃ* in Newar), speaking a separate language, the present-day Nepali (Nep. *khas kurā*, New. *khayṃ bhāy)*, probably contributed to the emergence of such a primeval expression of ethnic identity in the middle of the 17th century.

In addition, there is historical evidence that before the unification of Nepal at the end of the 18th century, and perhaps also during the 19th century, the term 'Newar' was only used by those groups belonging to the aristocratic caste of the Chatharīya, who were directly linked with the Malla palace and the top-level administration of the three kingdoms. It also seems that 'Newar' was also employed to label themselves by the whole Śreṣṭha group of traders and shopkeeper families, of which the Chatharīya are normally members and among whom they constitute only the upper strata (Toffin 1984: 380). This usage is still preserved, up to the present day, in some places, in Panauti for instance (Barré *et al.* 1981). The term was extended only at a later date to the rest of the Newar-speaking castes, that is, the remainder of the people speaking *nepāḥ bhāy*. Such a broadening in the meaning of the ethnonym was certainly the outcome of the eastward migration of the Parbatiyā Hindu castes and their conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-9. Confronted with another culture, the Newar developed an awareness of their own distinctiveness.

The growth of this sense of self-identity was accelerated due to the policies of the new regime established by these Hindu Nepali-speakers from the end of the 18th century. The subordinate status into which the Newar-speakers were placed obviously reinforced their feeling of 'Newarness', which seems to have existed only in a very weak form before that time. The Newar became marginalised as a whole. They become more exclusive, and their society turned into a more closed system than it had

been before.[3] 'It remains highly probable that the Newar caste hierarchy began to acquire after 1769 a rigidity it had not had before' (Gellner 1995*a*: 12).

As a matter of fact, the conquest of the Valley by the Parbatiyā has induced no regular intermarriage between the Ṭhakurī-Chetrī Nepali-speakers and high-status Newars, nor a Newarisation of the invaders (as had previously always been the case in the Valley). Two opposite blocs, the Newar on the one hand, the Parbatiyā on the other, faced each other, each with their own historical traditions and cultures. The politics of confiscation of power and lands, the suspicion towards the old elite of the Malla kingdoms, the measured discrimination against the Newar language during the Rana Period, and promotion of Nepali as the national language, produced a resentment, still very strong today among the Newar (Toffin 1975*a*). In the 1970s, it was still possible to find Jyāpu women in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, who could not speak Nepali, or did not want to speak a word of it. Similar situations were widespread at the same time in the Newar villages of Pyangaon and Theco.

The political change generated in 1990 by the uprising against the absolute monarchical rule of King Birendra and its 'partyless democracy' (the Panchayat political system) led to a more comprehensive policy of the state toward the diversity of Nepal's populations and the plurality of the national cultural heritage. A number of associations, formerly forbidden as public entities, were formed to represent the various hill and Tarai ethnic groups of the kingdom. These associations mobilised their members and sympathisers to defend their culture and demand a share in Kathmandu's decision-making process. They campaigned, without any success, for the adoption of ethnic quotas within the political and administrative system. More importantly, they joined forces and created a *Nepāl Janajāti Mahāsaṅg*, lit. 'Nepal Federation of Nationalities' (NEFEN), which comprises 40 of these activist groupings. Its goal was to turn the ethnic minorities into a powerful and effective pressure group. A communist-orientated association of the Newar community, the *Nepāl Bhāṣā Mākāḥ Khalaḥ*, founded in 1979, joined this confederation. The *Janajāti Mahāsaṅg* was directed mainly against the domination of the Parbatiyā upper castes, Brāhmaṇs, Ṭhakurīs and Chetrīs. They wanted Nepal be declared a secular state (this demand was granted in May 2006),

3 Some exceptions are mentioned by Gellner (1995*a*: 12), especially among the Buddhist Vajrācārya and Udās castes.

the imparting of primary level education through the medium of their mother tongues, and constitutional provisions for better representation of minority ethnic groups in all public fields.

Secondly, Newars are divided into about 30 different castes, Hindu and Buddhist, each of them with its own sense of identity. We have little information about the formation of a specific sense of self-awareness among the members belonging to these castes in the past. It seems, however, that the boundaries of solidarity rarely extended beyond the locality. For instance, the Jyāpu of Kathmandu are known to have been bound together by common institutions from at least the 19th century onward. They frequently expressed their force and unity, especially when a member of the community was stigmatised or badly treated by another Newar caste. But we have no evidence of any sense of communality and interdependence between the Jyāpu of the capital and those inhabiting the nearby localities of Lalitpur or Kirtipur.

The construction of new supralocal caste identities dates mainly from the 1990s. The new winds of liberty, which characterised this period, saw the springing-up of various collective movements proclaiming their own individuality and demanding more power. A number of caste associations, especially among low- and middle-status groups, were formed among the Newar. Their main purpose was to defend their individuality and to improve their image within the Newar community. It is worth noting that, in stark contrast to India and despite the efforts of some pressure groups, Nepal did not introduce during this period any system of reservations for 'scheduled castes' or 'other backward classes' (OBC) or middle- and low-status castes, to provide a social content to match the democratic political system. The development of caste associations in the Newar landscape itself (with occasional parallels among the Parbatiyās) did not aim at gaining any advantages or defending reserved seats in the various local and national assemblies or an ascribed quantity of posts in the administration. Rather, it mainly echoed the general and sudden advent of local and collective identities, which had been banned in the preceding period.

Diversity and unity among Jyāpu farmers

It is difficult to give any accurate figure for the current population of the Jyāpu caste (also called Maharjan in the honorific or polite style) living within the Kathmandu Valley. The census does not enter this parameter into its statistics. It just considers the Newar population as a whole. In

1996, Colin Rosser alleged that this farmers' caste represented 42 per cent of the total Newar population (p. 86). This is a plausible and realistic figure, corresponding more or less to the centrality of this caste in nearly all Newar settlements and their large numbers all over the Kathmandu Valley. If we project this figure on to the 2001 Newar population of the Kathmandu Valley (about 500,000 individuals, considering that more than half the Newar live outside the Valley), a total ranging from 200,000 to 210,000 is reached. But this estimate stands in need of verification.

In any case, a striking feature of the Jyāpu caste taken as a whole is their extensive geographical distribution within the Valley. Newar farmers reside not only in the rural zones, but also in the old core of the three former kingly Malla capitals (Chapter 3). The presence of peasants within the cities—a feature found in other civilisations, European as well as Asiatic—seems to be quite ancient. Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, for instance, have been formed by the aggregation of different smaller rural-cum-trading settlements. These two Jyāpu *milieux*, urban and rural, scarcely interact at all. For instance, they do not intermarry. Similarly, Jyāpus living in the cities very rarely visit the surrounding villages of their related districts. They virtually never participate in festivals occurring in nearby villages. They only do so if they originally came from that locality and have still relatives over there. They have a sense of being superior to the rural farmers, even if they are actually of a lower economic standard. These urban farmers, for instance, argue that they are more closely associated with influential kingly cults, such as the cult of the goddess Taleju. Cities, in all contexts, are thought of as more prestigious. Village life and its supposed communality are never associated with any single positive value, at least among Jyāpus.

Most of the Newar peasants call Buddhist priests to complete their main domestic ceremonies (funerals, above all). They perform specific Buddhist religious practices, such as the cult of *caitya* and the veneration of Karuṇāmaya (Lokeśvara, Būgadyaḥ in Newar). They celebrate the same Buddhist festivals as those of the high Newar Buddhist castes (Vajrācārya and Śākya); in particular, the Samyak distribution of food and cult dedicated to the Dīpaṅkara Buddhas; Matayāḥ (in Lalitpur) offerings of oil-lamps to all sites of Buddhist worship; Gūṃlā religious observances during the rainy season; Buddha Jayanti, i.e., celebration of the Buddha's nativity, etc. In Kathmandu, Jyāpus form, together with the Udās, the main lay support of the Buddhist religious community's *saṃgha* and *bāhāḥ* monasteries.

However, a non-negligible minority of farmers consider themselves Hindus, *śivamārgi*, and summon Brāhmaṇ priests to complete their domestic rituals. This is mainly the case in Bhaktapur city and district. Living formerly within the pale of a predominantly Hindu kingdom, these farmers are much more Hinduised than those of Lalitpur and Kathmandu, who are still attached to Mahāyana Buddhism. They refuse to be called Jyāpu or Maharjan, and label themselves Suwāl, or by the Nepali term, *kisān*, 'peasant'. They claim to be of a higher status than the Buddhist Jyāpu agriculturalists. No intermarriage is allowed between the two groups. Hindu Jyāpu villages are also to be found in other administrative areas, for instance in Harisiddhi and Pyangaon (Chapter 4), both located in Lalitpur District. In these rural settlements, the process of Sanskritisation has been undergone in a more profound sense than elsewhere.

As has been explained previously, Jyāpus are also divided into numerous sub-groups (Mū, Dāgol, Singh, Prajāpatī, Bwasi, Suwāl, Swāgumi, etc), some of which consider themselves to be superior to others (Chapter 5). It has also to be remembered that Jyāpus from Bhaktapur speak a Newar dialect hardly intelligible to the farmers of Lalitpur and Kathmandu, and that several villages have their own, if not dialects, at least lexical specificities. In spite of this linguistic diversity, and of internal divisions between groups of different status, urban-dwellers and village-dwellers, as well as between Hindus and Buddhists, all Jyāpus share a distinct common culture. They wear the same clothing and ornaments, admitting only some minor differences; they use the same agricultural tools and musical instruments; they worship the same gods and female deities; they live in the same sort of house. What is more, all of them are traditionally rice-cultivators, and especially irrigated-rice agriculturalists. They also possess the same social organisation, which confers the same centrality on music in their social and religious life, with this trend reaching its apex within the city of Kathmandu (Chapter 3). In all Jyāpu villages, the eldest members of the lineage and of the funeral *guthi* associations have an exceedingly important ceremonial, if not social, role.

Jyāpus as servants and patrons

Hierarchically, Jyāpus are a pure caste, but of inferior status. Most Newars consider them to be Śūdras in the canonical Hindu scheme of *varṇas*.[4] In

4 According to Gellner and Pradhan (1995: 162), a minority of high-caste Hindus classified Jyāpus as Vaiśya. It should be noted that Jyāpus themselves are not very much concerned with these *varṇa* categories. They carry little meaning for them.

the local hierarchy of caste, they stand below the Hindu Śreṣṭha and the Buddhist Udās, the two main castes of traders and shopkeepers, and above the service and artisan castes, such as the Citrakār painters, the Rañjitkār dyers, the Nau barbers, the Kau blacksmiths, and so on.

Until recently, most Jyāpus were characterised by their low economic condition and their social dependency. This was especially the case with those farmers living in the three largest cites of the Valley, and in most inter-caste villages where they do not form the dominant caste. In both these situations, Jyāpus were under the domination of high Hindu and Buddhist castes. They were chiefly engaged in cultivating the lands of these *thaḥpīṃ*, 'high-status families' (as well as Buddhist religious *guṭhī* lands), as tenants. They owned only a small portion of their cultivated land. In all these localities, farmers were a subaltern group, often kept in a servile status by higher castes, mostly the Hindu Śreṣṭha, and the Buddhist Udās, Śākya, and Vajrācārya. They were used as servants on numerous occasions, and even worked as casual labourers in case of necessity. The worst situation was in Kathmandu, where Jyāpu farmers represented less than 30 per cent of the Newar population.

Landlords clearly consider Jyāpu farmers to be social inferiors. As a matter of fact, Newar farmers were compelled to provide a wide variety of services to these patronal castes, which they called *bhājupīṃ*, 'respectable high castes'. Traditionally, they thus served as messengers and conveyors of invitations on ceremonial occasions. They were also called on to carry goods, presents and various worshipping materials, especially for the cult lineage deity, in their *khaḥmū* baskets. In addition, in numerous cases, they were the carriers of the palanquins at the marriages of these high castes. In return, the servant could expect the help of his landlord in times of economic difficulty, as in a traditional *jajmānī* system of relationships, with moral responsibilities on both sides. As Gellner and Pradhan (1995: 171) have noted, it was not uncommon for the farmers to wear the handed-down clothes of rich landlords. In fact, this custom still prevails in some parts of Kathmandu. In cities, Maharjans were also charged with pulling the chariots of the gods during processions, and throwing temporary bridges over the nearest river to facilitate communication with the surrounding area. In ancient times, they were the main doorkeepers of the Malla capitals. Some even say that farmers were enrolled as soldiers in the Malla armies during the mediaeval period.[5]

5 The word *māhāṃ*, used for soldiers in the Malla Period, seems to be related in one way or another to the title Maharjan. Cf. also Chapter 4.

In most cases, Jyāpus also have to provide ritual services to their patrons. Women used to scatter grain over the route of the funeral procession towards the cremation ground to ward off evil spirits. Until recently, they were employed as midwives, *didi aji*, at birth, propitiating the goddess Ajimā (or Hārītī) to protect the newborn baby. Jyāpu men, on the other hand, fill the role of cremation specialists for the high castes: they help cremate the dead corpse and worship Bhairava, the fierce male-god, associated with death in many contexts. Besides, some groups of peasants, especially in Lalitpur, play musical instruments (the *kāhāṃ* trumpet) at funerals. These religious duties traditionally reinforced their dependent status in relation to their high Hindu and Buddhist patrons. But, at present, their importance is on the wane.

In contrast, the economic and social conditions of the farmers were much better in mono-caste villages or in localities where they controlled most of the land and power. The case of Pyangaon, studied in Chapters 4 and 5, is conclusive in this matter. Müller-Böker (1987: 287) showed convincingly that, in general, the smaller the village, the less importance leased land has in its economy. Most land is leased out to tenants in large, multi-caste towns, and least in mono-caste localities of the Pyangaon type. In villages of this latter type, Jyāpus have long since represented the rurally dominant caste and enjoyed nearly all the attributes of power. Besides their own lands, they nonetheless sometimes till the fields of Śreṣṭha or Śākya families living in the neighbourhood. They often customarily supply these families, with whom they often have hereditary links, with ceremonial duties as detailed above.

Significantly, high Newar castes do not stress the ritual impurity of the farmers. They insist more on the rude manners of the farmers, their dirtiness, their uncontrolled behaviour when drunk, their incorrect way of speaking, their torn clothes, their lack of self-control. It is widely said that they do not know how to show respect. These negative stereotypes are still very strong within the Newar as well as the Parbatiyā elite. Jyāpus are also much feared because of their association with the highly perilous god Bhairava and the association of their wives with the disquieting goddess Hārītī. Hence, the inferiority of the Jyāpu peasants has more to do with servitude than with pollution. As was rightly remarked by Fuller (1996: 94) in relation to India, the caste system is not to be uniformly understood in terms of relative ritual purity.

Economic and socio-political changes within the caste

Jyāpus are one of the Newar castes that have taken the best advantage of the rapid social and economic development experienced by the Kathmandu Valley in recent years. In the first place, the traditional ties between landlord and tenant have been attenuated considerably since the land reforms of 1964. Nowadays, tenants are obliged to provide to the landlord only 23 *pāthī* of grain annually, which is considerably less than before. It represents 1/6th to 1/8th of the yield of the new types of high-yield rice and the new wheat varieties, instead of (in most cases) half the harvest in earlier times.

Tenants now also have security of tenure. They cannot be expelled from their tilled land at the landlord's whim, and they are supposed to receive approximately one-third of the value if the land is sold. In addition, the taxes they have to pay to the government on the lands are still being calculated according to rates dating from one century ago, which is admittedly an extremely advantageous situation for them. Similarly, when the land reforms were applied, many Jyāpus who cultivated *guṭhī* religiously endowed land, dedicated to the maintenance of temples or Buddhist monasteries, for instance, often succeeded in registering it in their own names and acquiring property rights over it. Lastly, as traditional owners of the land, even when possessed in very small quantity, farmers benefitted enormously from the increases in land prices all over the Kathmandu Valley. In the immediate surroundings of the capital, in Tahachal, for instance, where the five-star Soaltee Hotel has been constructed, the sale of a very small plot would provide the owner with a very large sum of money.

Since the 1960s, the Jyāpu have seized many new opportunities and begun to be employed in various sectors of the economy. They work now as artisans, cooks, gardeners, and waiters, and even in traditionally high-caste occupations such as shopkeeping or governmental office, or as engineers and in other white-collar jobs. From these occupations they get wages, in addition to the traditional agricultural income of the family. Some of them have been trained abroad in universities and advanced technical institutes. In brief, Newar farmers now form a somewhat prosperous and rising caste in matters of education and social activity. Their material conditions have greatly improved, though they have not yet reached the standard of the high Newar castes. Most of them still cultivate land of their own (at least some members of the family do), sometimes as tenants. But at the same time, a small minority have suffi-

cient land of their own to rent out some of it.

In other words, farmers have become less subservient to dominant castes of higher status. They are increasingly self-sufficient and do not live any more under the patronage of high castes. Some of them have even set up their own ventures, in the house-building sector for instance, employing wageworkers from India, and disengage progressively from agriculture. From clients, they became patrons. From peasants, they are increasingly turning to other sectors of activity. By and large, Jyāpus presently cultivate less and less. Yet, in many cases, especially in Kathmandu, old-aged farmers, attached to the ancient way of life, still have a shy and respectful attitude towards powerful persons and foreigners.

This new situation has loosened the old ties of dependency between landlord *(taḥsī)* and tenant *(mhay)*. This is especially the case among the young generation, which aspires to more and better education. Numerous conflicts over land tenure and landholdings have arisen and gone to court. Today, the high castes prefer to use labourers hired by the day to cultivate their land, so as not to contract obligations towards their tenants. Consequently, like other service castes, farmers have gradually become more reluctant to fulfil their traditional services, ritual or secular, towards the high castes, and view these hierarchical obligations as belonging to the past.

In spite of this economic betterment and social improvement, the Jyāpu are still highly conscious of their former exploited condition and economic dependency. This feeling has long since taken a political turn. In fact, Newar farmers have secretly supported the Communist Party of Nepal and other Marxist-Leninist organisations since the 1970s.[6] During the Panchayat political system they were underground sympathisers of various Marxist organisations, covertly supported by local agencies attached to the embassy of the People's Republic of China in Kathmandu. The Jyāpu (or Kisān) movement of those days was organised along quite military lines, keeping all its meetings secret. After the restoration of the multi-party system in 1990, Newar peasants affiliated openly with these organisations and started to give their votes massively and collectively to these communist parties.

Jyāpus rhetorically denounce landlordism and the rich, without real-

6 One should nonetheless recall that the founders of the Communist Party of Nepal in the 1950s were predominantly high-caste Newars. Today the communist parties are overwhelmingly run by Parbatiyā Brāhmaṇs (Gellner 1999: 120).

ising that their economic situation is much better than that of the great majority of Nepalis. For them, the tiller of the land should receive the benefits of his work, while the idle landlord has no right to its products. It comes as no surprise that Bhaktapur, where Newar farmers still form the majority of the population, is one of the strongest communist centres in the Kathmandu Valley. It is also the place where the clearest opposition exists between pro-Congress high-caste Śreṣṭhas and Communist peasants. The latter are affiliated to a minuscule pro-North Korean party: the Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party (NWPP), founded in 1975, and led by Narayan Man Bijukchen. This party, whose influence is mainly restricted to Bhaktapur,[7] overtly regards Stalin as an icon of the Communist movement.

Interestingly, this form of Nepali Marxism stresses class exploitation, not alienation by religion. Hinduism and what is called *bāhunwād*, the domination of the Brāhmaṇ caste, in the modern political vocabulary are much criticised for political reasons. But local and Hindu gods, as well as Buddhist, are still revered and remain in great esteem. King Birendra and his elder son themselves were highly respected until the tragic June 2001 slaughter of the royal family in the palace. Nowadays, it is not rare to see Jyāpus holding political meetings near or within Hindu or Buddhist temples. Communist activists can wear Marxist insignia attached to their dress side by side with an image of the god Matsyendranāth. The notion of religion as an 'opium for the people' is not currently emphasised.[8]

The rise of the Jyāpu Mahāguthi

In 1992 (Bhādra 26, 2050 BS), not long after the collapse of the Panchayat system and the restoration of democracy, a Maharjan caste organisation called Jyāpu Mahāguthi ('The Jyāpu Great Association') was formed by a group of young men. This communal association intended to bring together the Jyāpu caste *(jāt)* and to develop a sense of pride in being a farmer. The name Jyāpu itself (and not only the honorific term Maharjan), which had long since come to carry a pejorative connotation all over the Kathmandu Valley, started to be claimed and celebrated. To quote from a local pamphlet published by the organisation:

7 The NWPP won one seat in the 1999 legislative elections.

8 Cf. also Gellner (1997: 176): '[Newar] Communists, both by personal conviction and out of respect to their supporters, do not attack conventional religion.'

> It [the Mahāguthi] is a free and autonomous *guthi* (association) that attempts to replace feelings of caste inferiority with those of pride, inequality with equality, and communalism with good will (...). It aims to unite on a national level all Jyāpus from the Kathmandu Valley, wherever they may be earning their living. To raise caste awareness (...). It aims to advance the development of the Jyāpu caste by freeing it from economic, political, religious, and intellectual domination. To protect and develop *Nepā Bhāṣā*, the mother tongue of the Jyāpu caste (...).[9]

The founders of the association were Bipendra Maharjan, from Wotu ṭol in Kathmandu, and Rajbhai Jakami, from Panga, a village near Kirtipur. Bipendra soon became the President, and Rajbhai the General Secretary (2003). Interestingly, the Mahāguthi does not deal with social control within the Maharjan caste, a function traditionally held by funeral associations, *sī guthi*, or the association of the ward, *twāḥ guthi* (Chapter 3).

The creation of this all-Jyāpu organisation echoed the development of other caste-based groupings within Newar society at about the same time. The Mānandhar, as well as the Vajrācārya, the Rājopādhyāya, the Citrakār, the Khaḍgī, and some others, created their own collective bodies to unite and represent them, especially in their relations with outsiders. As was earlier stated, each of these corporate organisations had as its aim the improvement of the social and economic standing of its caste. They support and much strengthen the cohesiveness of the castes and defend their interests. However, the Jyāpu Mahāguthi has specific features that need more correctly to be linked with the rise of the ethnic revival movement among Nepal's Tibeto-Burmese groups after spring 1990. As was mentioned earlier, the new democratic environment and the political instability of the country led Tamangs, Gurungs, Rais, and Magars to search for greater recognition of their cultural, religious and linguistic differences. They created organisations of their own *(guthi, samiti*, or *saṅgh)* and started criticising high Nepali castes for having dominated them for centuries. Bāhuns (Brāhmaṇs) and Chetrīs were and are still accused of having appropriated their land and maintaining them in an economically backward state—a charge that currently has much truth in it.

Like these movements, the Jyāpu Mahāguthi is violently anti-

9 This pamphlet of the Jyāpu Mahāguthi has been translated by Gellner (1999: 154-5).

Brahmanic in inspiration. It aims to free Newar peasants from *brāhmaṇwād* (or *bāhunwād*, i.e., 'bāhunism'), even if Brāhmaṇs never really played an important role in their social life. Their leaders also accuse Buddhist Vajrācārya priests of having oppressed them as well. Yet, they still call on them to perform some of their rituals. There is a common concern among all these communal *janajāti*[10] movements to de-Sanskritise their language and institutions, so far as they can, and to look for autochthonous symbols, asserting their primary rights to the land and their cultural individuality. In addition, the Mahāguthi association puts its emphasis on the centrality of the Jyāpu within Newar culture. It stresses the necessary participation of the farmers in every important public and religious manifestation. It views them as the 'genuine', 'authentic Newars'. The farmers, a very conservative group indeed, are supposed to have preserved the old way of life better than other Newar castes, as well as a number of cultural elements that prevailed before Sanskritisation.

Conforming to a new trend supported by international organisations and also affecting the so-called *janajāti*, 'nationalities', of Nepal, Jyāpu activists have, in fact, adopted the concept of 'indigenousness' in their discourse. They now regard themselves as the *ādivāsi*—a word until recently unheard of in Nepal—the aboriginal people of the Kathmandu Valley. They tend to reconstruct the history of the Kathmandu Valley, and claim the primary antiquity in the area for the Jyāpu. Śreṣṭhas and other Hindu castes are seen as later migrants, who introduced Hindu notions of hierarchy. Without any offer of historical evidence, Jyāpus are presented as the primeval inhabitants of the region. An unbiased position in these sensitive and highly emotional matters is difficult (and somewhat hazardous) to set up. The anthropologist can only recall that in all localities of the Valley the Jyāpus usually open all religious processions, including those of the important local gods. Their position at the front of processions can be viewed symbolically as a yearly reappropriation and consecration of the social space by the divinities and their representatives (Toffin 1993). This obviously strengthens the links of the peasants with the native soil of the Kathmandu Valley; but it does not give any firm historical clue. Yet Jyāpu activists themselves mention this established fact and utilise it to justify their claims.

10 In the actual Nepali context, *janajāti*, literally 'people', designates the so-called indigenous ethnic groups mostly living in the hills. It is formed of the words *jan*, people, and *jāti*, birth, caste. It is often translated in English as 'nationalities'.

In all these respects, the Jyāpu Mahāguthi has achieved real success. Farmers of Kathmandu have now begun proudly to call themselves Jyāpu—their original appellation, and partly a derogatory one—and not Maharjan or Kisān, as they used to. They have succeeded in being considered genuine Newars by outsiders and political organisations. For instance, the municipality of Kathmandu at present regularly invites the Jyāpu musical troupes from the 32 traditional quarters of the city to honour foreign guests. On these occasions, Maharjans play *dhimay* drums, one of the more typical musical instruments of the Jyāpu, and swing above their heads the high *dhunyā* poles with yak-tails attached to their tips. In 1993, the Kathmandu city branch of the association offered a musical programme, with *dhimay*, other drums (*dāphā*, *dhāḥ*, etc), *kāhāṃ* trumpets and cymbals, in the royal palace of Narayanhiti, on the birthday of the late King Birendra. This programme had been organised by a Jyāpu who held a high position in the secretariat of the royal palace. The 32 Maharjan wards, *ṭol*s, of the capital were represented at this event, each with its own musical instruments. A collation, *samay*, was offered to the king, with traditional Jyāpu dishes, such as *lākhā mari* and *māywaḥ* flat-breads, various vegetables, and so on.

In 2000 (Pauṣ 10, 2057 BS), an important ceremony was held in Basantapur, central Kathmandu, to celebrate the first National Assembly of the association. This ceremony gathered together nearly 20,000 Jyāpus, from all over the Valley, and more than 200 traditional music groups, *bājā*. It was inaugurated by the then prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala. Huge processions of farmers dressed in their traditional costumes (now rarely worn in daily life) took place in various parts of the city. A conference, *sammelan*, was held also at the same time in Sonaguthi village (Lalitpur District). It assembled 15,000 village Jyāpus in traditional attire. The chief guest was Tirtha Ram Dangol (a Jyāpu himself), a distinguished member of the ruling Nepali Congress. All these programmes, more or less influenced by Hindi movies seen on television, obviously contribute to the promotion of Jyāpu culture and augment the presence of the association on the local and national scenes. They emphasise the distinctiveness of Newar peasant culture. Progressively, Jyāpu (and Newar) culture are equated with music, particularly that of the *dhimay* drum, which has become an ethnic emblem for a newly constructed identity.[11]

11 On a similar process among the Tharu of the Nepal Tarai, see Krauskopff (2003: 199-243).

The Jyāpu Mahāguthi is an egalitarian movement, influenced mainly by democratic and communist notions, but, as far as I know, politically independent. It rejects the ideas of a caste society, and of hierarchical links between high and low castes. Instead, the association defends the equality of all men (and women) before the law, and civil rights. The process of Sanskritisation, i.e., the imitation of high Hindu castes and their Brahmanical rites to improve one's status within the caste system, is rejected. Members of the Mahāguthi do not search for Indian models. They are anti-caste by nature, and propose on the contrary an abandonment of the whole hierarchical system. In the same way, the Mahāguthi stress, though not overtly, their attachment to Buddhist values, which are seen as closer to their egalitarian ideas. By these means, Buddhism supplies its members with a new sense of ethnic identity and helps them become mentally emancipated from 'Brāhmaṇ domination'.

Interestingly enough, Jyāpu Mahāguthi activists have chosen a very communal and traditional way of expanding their organisation. They have decided to establish links and branches through the traditional *guthi* socio-religious associations of the Jyāpu (i.e., *sī guthi* and *twāḥ guthi).* In other terms, they opted to expand the organisation on a corporate ground, and not on the basis of individual membership. The ultimate decision must therefore be taken by the elders, the *thakāli*, who have their proper (and reverent) opinion on who are really Jyāpus or not. This issue is regularly at stake in internal meetings. The young generation has strong reservations concerning this process. They would prefer a more personal process of affiliation. But until now, the whole organisation is based on this ward structure: each *ṭol* of the affiliated locality has its own representative, called *du-jaḥ.*[12]

The Jyāpu Samāj association of Lalitpur

The Jyāpu Mahāguthi has so far not succeeded in uniting all the Jyāpu of the Kathmandu Valley and overcoming the traditional divisions of their caste-fellows revealed by anthropological studies. The association was at first constituted with farmers of the city of Kathmandu, who have long since been very cohesively organised through their traditional division into 32 quarters (Chapter 3), and of a few further villages. It has estab-

12 *Jaḥ* (New.) means 'ordinary member'. In the organisational terminology of the Mahāguthi, the ward level is called *Jyāpu pucāḥ*, and the locality level, *Jyāpu Samāj*. The Kathmandu city branch is located in Yatkha ṭol.

lished many branches in rural areas, even in an inward-turned locality such as Pyangaon, as well as in small towns like Pharping [Phanpi], Kirtipur, etc. However, the Hindu farmers of Bhaktapur have not until now affiliated with this pan-Jyāpu association. These peasants are still reluctant to call themselves Jyāpu. They keep apart from the movement, even if discussions are regularly held on the subject. A somewhat similar situation occurs with the Jyāpu of the city of Lalitpur. This community, which amounted to roughly 30,000 individuals in 2001, according to an internal unofficial census, still refuses to join the Mahāguthi. The Jyāpu of this city participate occasionally in some common events with this movement (the 2000 inauguration ceremony of the First Assembly of the Jyāpu Mahāguthi, for instance), but for all important and internal affairs, they formed in 1993 (2051 BS) their own association, called the Jyāpu Samāj (lit. 'the Jyāpu Society'). The Society has its own committees and organisational structure. It is currently restricted to the Jyāpu from Lalitpur city only; the Jyāpu villages belonging to the Lalitpur District have all joined the Jyāpu Mahāguthi.

What are the reasons invoked to defend such a parochial attitude? Members of the Jyāpu Society first underline the specificity of the Lalitpur peasants. They have, they say, a strong and distinct communal heritage in many fields and are used to settling internal matters within the locality. Even in legal affairs, they emphasise their relative autonomy from the municipality and official judicial institutions. They do not readily admit interference from outside. Indirectly criticising the Jyāpu Mahāguthi, they also stress that, among their community, they are not used to giving long-term mandates to their delegates, as is apparently the case within the Mahāguthi. In addition, according to the leaders of the Jyāpu Society, Lalitpur peasant leaders more often defend their fellow-members when conflicts arise between landowners and Jyāpu tenants and thus put the agrarian problem on the agenda. Whatever the reason, parochialism and local territorial links happen to be stronger than pan-Jyāpu solidarity. But their influence did not extend beyond the municipality precincts, or only did so on some few token occasions.

The objectives of the Jyāpu Society are similar in most respects to those of the Jyāpu Mahāguthi: 'to preserve and promote language, arts, literature and culture'.[13] It intends to carry out research on Jyāpu culture, 'to change life style', and to encourage rural health, as well as educa-

13 As proclaimed in a leaflet in my possession.

tional, economic, industrial, and intellectual development. The Society also proposes 'to eradicate conservative rites'. They wish to maintain an attitude of cooperation towards national and international organisations that have similar objectives as their own. The search for autochthony and indigenousness is as important as it is with the Jyāpu Mahāguthi; it is in fact the main political message of the organisation.

The Society has organised several cultural shows of traditional songs, music and dances in Lalitpur over the last years. Their leaders regularly sponsor *dhimay* drumming processions and traditional Jyāpu costume parades in the city. At times they honour the chief *thakāli* of the 45 traditional quarters, *ṭol*, of Lalitpur and its music teachers. They also back the motor rally that takes place every year in autumn on the occasion of 'Nepal Era, Happy New Year', *bhintunā* ('Good wishes!'), the first day of the year according to the Newar's own calendar, *Nepāl Sambat* (the old Newar era).[14] As a matter of fact, the Newar New Year, which falls in October-November, during the Swanti festival (Nep. Tihār), has since 1977 been the time for massive demonstrations in favour of the recognition of *Nepāl Sambat* as the official and national era of Nepal, instead of the *Bikram Sambat* (BS), often presented by the Newar as a foreign-imposed era. These annual demonstrations are at present one of the strongest expressions of Newar identity and nationalism. Finally, the Jyāpu Society regularly organises social welfare programmes: blood donation sessions, mass-sponsored runs against drug abuse, English-language training sessions, and so on. In all these pursuits, the association is generously helped by the Lalitpur municipality.

But the main activity of this association is the construction of a 'Jyāpu Academy Centre', *Jyāpu Prajñā Bhawan*, located in the southern part of Lalitpur, near the temples of Bālkumārī and Bhwala Ganedyaḥ. The rituals of foundation were carried out in 2001. In 2004, when I visited the site, the walls of the building had already been built. The Academy has a floor space of 18,000 square metres, distributed on four levels. The ground floor will be occupied by a library and the office. The first floor will shelter the Museum, where special care will be taken to display the traditional agricultural tools, musical instruments, clothing and dresses, and jewels of the Jyāpu, as well as illustrations of the life-cycle rituals of Newar peasants. The second floor will be used as a conference hall for 380 persons. On the fourth floor, used as a roof terrace, a Buddhist monu-

14 This era starts in 879 CE.

ment, a *caitya*, will be built and consecrated. The expenses (about 7 millions of Nepali rupees had already been spent in 2004) are covered mainly by contributions from the Jyāpu community of Lalitpur, with some additional funding from the municipality.

The idea of building an ethnographic museum probably came from the 'Nepal Federation of Nationalities', *Nepāl Janajāti Mahāsaṅg*. Such a project is actually one of their demands and is included in their programme. 'Patrimonialisation' of indigenous culture is anyhow a widespread phenomenon, affecting the so-called indigenous groups all over the world. This remarkable phenomenon arose especially after the recent United Nations initiatives in that sense, and its decision to dedicate a decade (from 1993 onward) to Indigenous Peoples and their rights. In Lalitpur, as all over the Kathmandu Valley, the perspective is to endow Jyāpus with a distinctive past and a prestigious identity through which peasants may be enabled to regain their self-respect after years of submission, depreciation and denigration. The Lalitpur Museum and its attached Academy are clearly a rhetorical instrument not only seeking to bestow a sense of pride upon Newar peasants, but also to claim a separate identity in order to facilitate a Jyāpu revolt against the caste system. It can be seen as a cultural counter-offensive against Hindu values. Culture here is overtly politicised.

Egalitarian ideals and hierarchical realities

These egalitarian and communal ideals are nonetheless contradicted at the empirical level by centuries of Hinduisation and the basically introverted character of most localities. One thorny problem the Jyāpu Mahāguthi is facing concerns the heterogeneity of the Newar peasant community and its internal divisions in the matter of hierarchy. The Mahāguthi has succeeded in integrating in some ways the inhabitants of Pyangaon (which they call Pyangā) and some Balāmi from Makwanpur District. But the Desar, the Gāmo, the Tepay, and, above all, the Pahari have not yet joined the organisation for reasons of status and because of notable specificities in cultural traditions. The Mahāguthi has, therefore, not enabled the peasants to transcend all those sub-castes or specific groups that are partly the result of the long process of Sanskritisation within the Valley. It has not been able to surmount these inequalities and this geographical fragmentation. The logic of localism and territorial introversion continues to play a role. Similarly, the incorporation of Newar peasants from the diasporas, Tansen, Dolakha, etc, is a complicated prob-

lem to deal with. Most of these people still have difficulties with being labelled Jyāpu, a word they even now consider derogatory—which it actually still is among Nepal's elite. In most cases, they called themselves Śreṣṭha.

Two other features of the traditional Maharjan social structure also contradict the egalitarianism advocated by the Jyāpu Mahāguthi and the Jyāpu Samāj. In the first place, as was stated in earlier chapters, Jyāpus not only customarily serve high castes, but they also act as patrons towards various artisan and service castes, including the Untouchables. All these castes fulfil duties they owe to the Jyāpu and provide them with ritual services. Some very important rituals, domestic or collective—local village festivals such as the *deś jātrā*, for instance—cannot be celebrated without the participation of Nāy butchers, Kusle musicians, Nau barbers, and so on. Up to the present day, farmer families feel the need to transfer impurity, inauspiciousness and evil outside their caste. And, to date, Jyāpus pay these inferior groups for such services in grain. To the best of my knowledge, such hierarchical links are still very much alive, except perhaps in large cities like Kathmandu. I have never seen a Jyāpu taking leftover food that has been in contact with the mouth, *cipa*, of an Untouchable.

In the second place, Jyāpu women were traditionally excluded from all important collective decisions within the community. They might hold power within the household but they were never or very rarely consulted on *guthi* and caste affairs. Such an exclusion from political decisions was reinforced among the Newar farmers by the prohibition on the playing of music by women (Chapters 3 and 13). Newar traditional music, so important in the internal social structure, is always played in a religious atmosphere from which women are excluded. In these circumstances, egalitarianism is merely programmatic, and opposed by the traditional social framework. Nevertheless, it is fair to notice that the Jyāpu Mahāguthi does actively try to handle this problem. Its leaders are currently urging women to participate in their committees. When I met various members of the organisation in 1997, some women were present. Unfortunately, however, they never dared to take the floor. In 2003, the Central Committee had only two women among its 23 members.

Substantialisation or ethnicisation of caste ?

Sociologically, the Mahāguthi is a good illustration of the process of the 'substantialisation' of caste, a concept formulated by Louis Dumont when

speaking of changes in modern India. The French sociologist defines it as 'an essential phenomenon', 'the transition from a fluid, structural universe in which the emphasis is on interdependence...to a universe of impenetrable blocks, self-sufficient, essential, identical and in competition with one another' (1980: 269). Greater emphasis is put on the horizontal ties at the expense of vertical ones. The complementary relationships between castes are questioned: 'each caste is on the way to becoming an individual confronting other individuals'. This process is changing the nature of caste, but it has not undermined its importance in contemporary society. It can help us to understand the rise of the Mahāguthi as well as other transformations currently being undergone by Newar society.

However, if the Jyāpu case is taken, this process has to be more appropriately called a phenomenon of 'ethnicisation'. Newar farmers tend, in fact, to treat their caste as an autonomous ethnic group, attached to its own values and institutions. They are arguing from their own distinctive culture and way of life to establish themselves as an independent body. Significantly, some Jyāpu activists consider themselves to be *janajāti*, an ethnic 'nationality', like the Tamang, Magar, and other ethnic groups of Nepal. And we should recall in this connection that the Newar as a whole are on the list of the 51 minorities recorded by the 'Nepal Federation of Nationalities' (NEFEN). Other Jyāpu leaders, more moderate, prefer not to affiliate with this organisation. They thus want to preserve the solidarity of the Newar as a whole and prevent conflict with the Newar upper castes, who are definitely reluctant to admit the ideas propounded by NEFEN. Śreṣṭha and Chatharīya families, in particular, strongly reject any alignment with the other minorities of Nepal.

To sum up, Jyāpus want to stand together as an ethnic group against the caste system as a whole and the 'oppressiveness of the dominant Hindu society'. The notion of autochthony plays a key role here. Seeing themselves as the autochthons of the Kathmandu Valley, as the Gurung, Magar, and Rai view themselves as the native inhabitants of the hills, Jyāpus take pride in being 'sons of the soil', the foundation on which Newar civilisation has been built up. Similarly, Buddhism helps towards supplying a new ethnic identity.

Such a strong process of the 'ethnicisation' of caste is not an accident. In my opinion, it must be connected to the structure of the Jyāpu social organisation. For a long time now, Jyāpus have been arranged in corporate units attached to their own locality. These territorial units need

to maintain contact with low castes to divert ill fortune, to get rid of various forms of impurity (death, birth, menstruation, various accidental pollutions) and to obtain tools or domestic implements needed in daily life. But, on the whole, the internal organisation of the Jyāpu caste has few things in common with the caste system. It has its own institutions and values.

Three points are worth outlining in this respect. First, the hierarchical principles within Maharjan families and associations are based much more on seniority—the role of the eldest *thakāli*, the antiquity of the link to the land, special relations with the guardian god of the locality—than on notions of purity and pollution. Secondly, the preferred form of marriage is isogamy, not hypergamy nor hypogamy. As was rightly remarked by Quigley (1986), Newars, especially Jyāpus, prefer marriage between equals. Such a form of marriage is not in agreement with the hierarchical implications of the caste system. Lastly, the non-negligible number of mono-caste farmers' villages or almost totally mono-caste villages[15] gives morphological evidence of the cohesiveness and autonomy of the local Jyāpu community, at the expense of interdependence relationships between different castes. In these localities, people's identity is primarily constituted by the village social unit rather than by their caste. The compulsory intra-caste *guthi* system (*guthi* are usually mono-caste), central to the social structure of the Jyāpu, is another evidence of the basic underlying principles different from those of the caste system.

Conclusions

The Jyāpu case illustrates well the process of identity-formation induced by the development of strong ethnic feelings and ethnic nationalism in the country after the popular movement of 1990. It clearly rests on the transformation of castes having rights and duties within an overall Hindu-dominated system into self-independent units. The caste system is here converted into a collection of close groupings corresponding to modern ideas of social stratification, in clear defiance of caste principles. This reveals a total set of relationships that is in the process of change. As was stressed above, this transformation is not totally complete: the Newar as a whole are themselves sometimes treated as an ethnic group and ethnicised in a similar manner to the Jyāpu caste. The Newar peasant

15 'Seven villages [of the Kathmandu Valley] can be termed 'pure' Jyapu villages' (Müller-Böker 1988: 27).

movement reflects these contradictory trends. Moreover, the construction of this ethnic identity is connected with the rediscovery of a culture and its past. Jyāpu self-appreciation and pride are just beginning to arise from the invention of local roots. Such militant autochthony obviously reinforces the process of caste 'substantialisation'.

It is worthy of note that such an attempt to revitalise an ancient culture occurs at the very moment that these same traditions are just on the verge of collapse. In other words, in order to legitimise their new aspirations in society, Jyāpus are glorifying a culture that is progressively disappearing. In doing so, they are putting forward old ideas, dating from the very origins of anthropology. According to these old conceptions, cultures are strictly delineated by a boundary, they have few contacts with each other, they are closely associated with a particular tract of country (for instance, the Kathmandu Valley), they can be defined by a 'checklist of characteristics', and so on. Societies and cultures are viewed as self-contained and unchanging entities. These ideas do not correspond with the newer anthropological approaches. Theoretical developments in cultural studies had led us to understand that 'cultures' are not, nor had they ever been, naturally bounded entities. They are not static, either: they are dynamic, fluid and constructed situationally, in particular places and times.

The anti-Brāhmaṇ, anti-Sanskrit resentment of the Jyāpu Mahāguthi and other Nepali ethnicities is not a new phenomenon on the Indian subcontinent. It presents close similarities with the movement that emerged in 1916 in Tamil Nadu (South India). Leaders of the Tamil non-Brāhmaṇ castes tried to show how 'the Brāhmin invader had brought the evil institution of caste into India, and had used his great prestige and power to strengthen his will on the society by making laws in his own favour' (Srinivas 1972: 100-106). These activists attempted to rid the Tamil language of long-established Sanskrit words and encouraged people to develop the use of the Tamil language for political and other purposes. South Indian members of these associations regarded themselves as Dravidians and citizens of a sovereign, independent state. They were against the employment of Brāhmaṇ priests, for instance, to conclude marriage rituals. They even encouraged non-Brāhmaṇs not to call upon Brāhmaṇ priests to perform weddings and other rituals. Assaults on individual Brāhmaṇ priests, destroying images of Hindu deities—in particular, the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa—and trying to burn copies of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* have been frequent occurrences. Interestingly enough, the

opposition to Brāhmaṇ dominance did not come from the low and oppressed castes, but from the leaders of the powerful dominant rural castes.

In contrast to that of India, the social structure of Nepal has been better preserved from foreign influences until quite recent times. It is also characterised by more archaic features. It is, therefore, natural that such an anti-Brahmanical movement, active in an underground form for some decades, should emerge in an open fashion much later. It will be interesting in the future to investigate more deeply to what extent the Jyāpu include Vajrācārya Buddhist priests in their anti-Sanskrit feelings. As is known, a small minority of the farmers has taken up the teachings of Theravāda monks. Though they are far fewer in number than are the recruits from the Śākya and Udās high Buddhist castes, this new development is significant. This conversion to Theravāda, even if partial, offers a more egalitarian form of religion than the traditional Newar Buddhism of the Vajrācārya. It therefore appeals to the new egalitarianism asserted by the Newar peasants.

I would like to conclude by stressing two different processes of contemporary change in the Newar caste system. The first is illustrated by the economically and socially most advanced Hindus, the Śreṣṭha. These traders and merchants are nowadays rapidly being westernised. They look to English boarding schools for better education for their children, and try to send them abroad as soon as they have some degree, to complete their studies or find new economic opportunities in the West. Śreṣṭhas are also experiencing a process of Nepalisation; the Nepali language is more and more spoken within their families, at the expense of Newar, which is looked on as a disadvantage in the process of improving their status and style of life. These are the first to imitate Parbatiyās and to adopt Parbatiyā customs (Gellner 1986: 141). They have consequently given up a number of Newar customs. On the other hand, Jyāpu peasants insist on Newar culture, defend the Newar language, *nepāḥ bhāṣā*, and want to be associated with 'Newar-ness'. They tend to essentialise culture, with indigenist presuppositions. Interestingly enough, there is an increasingly close association between 'Newar-ness' and peasant ways through the regular exhibition of Jyāpu folklore and folk artefacts on festive and official state occasions.

This bipolar distinction drawn between the two major Newar castes as far as patterns of change are concerned is important. It obviously reveals ancient oppositions between the two major rival groups within Newar society. Śreṣṭhas have always been oriented towards the outside

world; they have long since been inserted in open market networks, and they marry over greater distances than any other Newar caste. Jyāpus, on the contrary, are traditionally inward-turned; they record a very high percentage of territorial endogamy, and their social lives are much more turned towards closed units, either of the kin or of the associative type.

Such a contrast between Śreṣṭhas and Jyāpus is less an opposition between rural and urban than an opposition between merchants and peasants. What we have here is a difference between, on the one hand, a group deeply affected by globalisation and oriented toward cosmopolitan values and, on the other hand, another part of the same society incarnating an old agrarian sociality and representing a new militant vernacularism that has been created over time. The Jyāpu are clearly promoting an ethno-cultural defence of vernacular indigenism characterised by an affective attachment to old structures of belonging and a particularist notion of culture. From the economic and social point of view, such a duality is likely to reduplicate and strengthen the traditional inequality between the two castes. In other words, change is mediated by more traditional patterns. The great political upheavals of 1990 and 2006 must not be allowed to obliterate the past. What had happened before in terms of ethnic formation has to be borne in mind in order to understand the present situation.

13

Gender and Social Change

Contesting the masculinity of musical instruments

Almost from the very first day of my fieldwork among the Newar in the southern part of the Kathmandu Valley, I realised that construction of sexual difference was a salient feature of their society and culture, and that it would not be possible to approach any aspect of the socio-religious organisation of this ethnic group without dealing with male-female polarity and the position of women. As among most Nepali ethnic communities, Newar women are associated with strong positive values, such as birth, fertility, and wealth, and at the same time relegated hierarchically to a subordinate status. I was also soon puzzled by the secret male groups linked to death and sacred dances. These groupings, organised along gender differentiations, reminded me more of African models than South Asian ones.

In spite of such an interest, these themes have barely appeared in my published works until recent times. I have chiefly been challenged to finalise my reflections on the duality of sexes by the multiplication of gender studies over the last few decades. It is clear that gender, seen as a system of culturally constructed identities, affords an exceptional oppor-

Previously unpublished. The book for which this article was written was apparently never published. Chiara Letizia in Paris and Seira Tamang in Kathmandu offered much helpful advice in improving a first draft of the manuscript. I am also most grateful for the valuable assistance provided by Bonnie Chaumeil of CNRS concerning references on the anthropology of gender.

tunity to explore fundamental questions about the conceptualisation of human society and symbolism. In this chapter, I present some preliminary notes on these topics, starting from more encompassing issues related to legal rights and law ethnography in Nepal. I then address Newar male-female asymmetry in the specific multi-ethnic Nepali context. Subsequently, I will focus on gender polarity and social change among the Newar.

Women's legal rights: An anthropological perspective

Since the fall of the Rana oligarchic political system in 1951, a number of laws in favour of women has been adopted by the Nepali state. A new civil code, the *Muluki Ain*, was promulgated in 1964 (slightly modified in 1975), replacing the old code promulgated in 1854 by the Hindu Rana elite. Daughters were entitled to a full share of their paternal heritage in case they remain unmarried until they were 35, according to the 1975 edition of the *Muluki Ain*. Child marriage is presently forbidden: the minimum age of marriage for a girl has been raised to 16 with her guardian's consent, and 18 without the guardian's consent. The current code also forbids polygamy without the first wife's permission and the unilateral divorce of women by men. If the husband does take a second wife legally,[1] the first wife may take her share of his property (on which she receives usufructuary rights) and live apart from him. In addition, women are allowed to divorce in many more cases than before.

The notion of caste has disappeared from the new legislation adopted in the post-Rana period; legally, caste has become a private, family affair. Law is no longer validated by reference to Hinduism. As a matter of fact, the power of the state in inheritance matters, divorce, adoption, custody of children in the case of separation between husband and wife, has greatly increased to the detriment of the agnatic lineage and local customs. As a legal entity, women, for instance, appear much more independent from their natal family and their husband's family than before. Interestingly, provisions for adoption have also been radically transformed. Any fatherless child below the age of sixteen can now be adopted with the consent of the mother or whoever else has brought him

1 A man may legally take a second wife if the first one has leprosy, if she has incurable contagious venereal disease, if she becomes blind in both eyes, if she becomes unable to walk, if she becomes incurably insane, if she is barren after 10 years of married life (Bennett 1979: 63). The 2002 amendment has strengthened women's rights to divorce and increased penalties regarding polygamy.

up. Previously, adoption was theoretically restricted to agnatic relatives within seven generations.

An important amendment was adopted in September 2002, establishing a wife's equal right to her husband's property immediately after marriage rather than when she reaches the age of 35 or after remaining married for 15 years as in the earlier provision in the *Muluki Ain*. This 11th amendment to the civil code also gives a widow the right to claim her share of property from the joint family after the death of her husband, and to use this property even if she gets re-married. Prior to this, the widow retained her share of ancestral property only if she remained chaste and unmarried. More importantly, in spite of the opposition from conservative Hindu groups, abortion is now legal in Nepal during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and up to 18 weeks in the case of rape, incest, foetal damage or to protect a woman's health. Before 2002, abortion was criminalised and was punished by imprisonment. These abortion rights have been bitterly criticised by orthodox Hindus, who condemn present-day society calling it *kaliyug*, 'the black age'. In any case, the new legal dispositions are clearly a landmark in the country's social history.[2] As has been suggested by a prominent French anthropologist (Héritier 1995), the origin of the subordinate status of women might stem from men's control of their reproductive function, in other words, of their power to give life.

Admittedly, the Nepali state still demonstrates a paternalist and discriminatory attitude towards women. To this day, a woman cannot apply for a passport without her guardian's permission.[3] It is also true that notwithstanding the fact that the 1990 Constitution of Nepal grants equal political rights to men and women (both can vote and there is no restriction on a woman's candidacy for any post to be filled by an election), very few women are elected or nominated to high political or administrative positions.[4] These forms of inequality are deeply anchored in society

2 However, free abortion is so far illegal. Besides, some Nepali women charged with abortion before 2002 are still imprisoned.

3 The government argues that this disposition aims at protecting Nepali girls and woman from having dealings with India brothels. It is estimated that 200,000 Nepali women and girls currently work as prostitutes in India (mostly Mumbai, New Delhi and Kolkata).

4 In the general elections held in May 1999, out of 2,238 candidates for 205 seats, only 135 were women. The 1990 Constitution guarantees that 5 per cent of the seats are 'reserved' for women at the national level, while 20 per cent is reserved for women at the local level. See Tawa Lama 2004. In June 2006, the new democratic government led by Girija Prasad Koirala passed a law guaranteeing 33 per cent seats for women.

and are regularly pointed out by women's rights groups. After the people's movement of April 2006, for instance, very few women have come to the fore. Though they took part *en masse* in the anti-monarchical movement, they were left out by both the Maoist insurgents and the Seven Party Alliance.

Furthermore, in inheritance matters, equality between the sexes has not yet been achieved; so far, daughters have no right to their paternal property if they marry.[5] Much progress has still to be made to reach the western standard in matters of women's rights.[6] In spite of the above-mentioned transformations, Hindu rules still exert a strong hidden influence on many aspects of the civil code. In everyday life, the weight of traditional patterns is even now very strong in all sectors of family and public life. As the Nepali proverb goes: *chorā paye khasi, chorī paye pharsī* (If a son is born, slaughter a goat in celebration; if it is daughter, a pumpkin will do). Nepali women experience various kinds of gender discrimination throughout their lifetime. Nepal is the only country in the South Asia region where women's life expectancy is lower than men's. Nonetheless, Panchayat rule (1961-1990) and the multi-party democratic system since 1990 have proved quite favourable to the feminist cause. On the whole, the state has definitively given daughters and wives greater rights in many political, economic, social and cultural areas.

With one or two exceptions, little is known about the impact of the new civil laws in actual practice. Do all ethnic groups and castes follow these provisions? Does a local 'customary' legal system survive here and there? It seems that in most cases Nepali women are aware of their rights to property, divorce and children. It also seems that local people respect state laws throughout the country and that they rely on the same provisions of the current legal code to arbitrate disputes within the family and to settle different cases regarding the succession of property. But as Kate Gilbert (1993: 246) recently stressed, 'It does not mean that individuals...follow the rules without debate, negotiation, and struggle.' As a matter of fact, there are many areas of ambiguity in the laws per-

5 The 2002 Amendment makes a daughter of any age an heir to her parental property. But this daughter has to return the property if she gets married.

6 The Maoist insurgency programme included a demand according to which 'girls should be given equal property rights to those of their brothers' (Karki and Seddon 2003: 185). I have no information on the application of that disposition in areas controlled by the Maoists. The revolutionary All Nepal Women's Association (Maoist) is also calling for the prohibition of alcohol. According to them, alcohol is directly responsible of domestic violence directed at women.

taining to the family, marriage, and partition. Places for strategic manipulation exist as well. We may also remain sceptical as to the implementation of this law in a country where more than 40 per cent of the people live below the poverty line. Nepal conforms to a widespread pattern of transitional situations, in which reforms have been undertaken in a number of sectors, but have not yet been successfully implemented.

Gender asymmetry in Nepal: Newars and others

Whether or not these regulations are respected, the status of women varies considerably from one ethnic group to another. Nepal is still an extremely diverse country, a country of multi-ethnic cultures and pluralistic languages. The social identity of a person still depends heavily on his or her membership to an ethnic group. In most cases, the patronymic of a person is itself the name of the ethnic community, or is linked to it. In spite of the progressive intermingling of populations in nearly all regions, these groups are, in fact, of central importance in many contexts. For instance, many different acceptable models of marriage exist throughout the country. It is well known that polyandrous marriages prevail in a few of the high Tibetan enclaves of Nepal, even if these marriages are not recognised under Nepali laws. To take another subject, virginity is seen as a highly valued social concept among orthodox Bāhun-Chetrī Hindu castes (Parbatiyās). These families consider premarital sex, multiple marriages and separations as unacceptable social practices. They often see women who have married into the household as a source of danger and pollution. On the contrary, it is well documented that in Tamang and Gurung society, women are freer, less submitted to men and to the Hindu ideology. These two *janajāti*[7] ethnic communities provide opportunities for unmarried boys and girls to meet in gatherings, sing courtship songs, exchange presents; sometimes these encounters lead to sexual relations. Premarital sex as well as other social practices unacceptable outside mainstream 'Nepali culture' exist among most of the Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups of the hills, from the Magars in the west to the Kiratis in the east. Furthermore, women from these groups do not observe rules regarding menstrual pollution as strictly as females from Hindu high-castes. And they are not barred from their own household at their first menstruation (Gilbert 1993: 9).[8] In a word, they enjoy a great deal of

7 Presently, *janajāti* designates the 'indigenous groups' mostly living in the hills. Cf. Chapter, 12.

8 However, in some cases, the Tamang woman suffers from severe exclusion. Thus, in the

equality with men, even if gender constraints and restrictions on women's behaviour also exist in some cases (Des Chene 1998).

These two groups of population are opposed in a number of other fields: equality as far as salary is concerned, for instance. During my fieldwork in Dhading and Nuwakot Districts in the 1980s, I was struck by the fact that the wages paid to Tamang women workers in rice fields were equal to what the males received, whereas in the Kathmandu Valley the women's wages were between 20 and 50 per cent less than what men got. Among the Tamang of the Ankhu Khola Valley, women are not thought to be 'weak' compared to men. I heard Tamang men praise the women for their strength, endurance, and ability to work long hard hours. These differences are clear indicators of the contrasting status of women in society. In the same way, Limbu, Gurung or Magar women do not only confine themselves to child-rearing and cooking activities. They bring cash into the household and share in agricultural work. Due to male migration towards the south, women's economic contribution to the local mountain economy is at least of equal importance as men's. Besides, Thakali and Sherpa communities take pride in the business activities of their women in a way that offends the dominant Hindu castes. On the contrary, Bāhun-Chetrī females were until recently expected to limit their activities exclusively to domestic affairs. They are supposed to be shy, patient, good, sequestered, faithful, devoted to gods and their husbands. The songs at the Tīj festival, an important ritual among these Hindu women, express deep resentment over the differential treatment of sons and daughters and inequality between males and females in domestic relations. In other words, being a woman in Nepal varies considerably among the various societies the country is made up of.

Even among the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley, the condition of women differs greatly according to caste. High Hindu castes such as Rājopādhyāyas, Chatharīyas and Śreṣṭhas are deeply committed to Brahmanical values. These castes are more or less in concord with the Bāhun-Chetrī values about the purity of women, their seclusion during their periods, virginity before marriage, etc. Among them, the restriction on a woman during her menstruation remains severe. She has to refrain from all household work, so that her period is sometimes referred to ironically as *mahārānī jyuye*, 'being a queen' (Gellner 1991: 115). My

Salme Tamang village of Salankhu Khola (Nuwakot District), where I carried out fieldwork in the 1980s, a wife carrying an illegitimate child, not recognised by a father (Tamang: *pro*), had to give birth outside the village, near the forest.

observations among Chatharīya families of Panauti confirm this statement. In addition, for the newly married bride, the first years in the husband's house represent a difficult time. She has to behave in a submissive manner. She is expected to be deferent towards her mother-in-law and to do most of the hard work in the family such as cleaning, washing and cooking. But as soon as she has children, her status rises. And when the couple settles independently, wives take part in every important decision, concerning family budgets, the choice of marriage for the children, the sale or buying of land, finance ventures, etc. In fact, mature women of these Hindu castes are very influential in all domestic affairs.

Newar Buddhist families of high status (Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udās) are also concerned with impurity rules to be observed by wives within the household. But, as far as I could gather, the distinctive feature of these groups is the strong interest parents show towards the education of their daughters and their concern with obtaining good jobs for them. In the urban context, marriage does not entail renunciation of further education, at the university level, for instance, for girls. Nor do Śākya or Vajrācārya women become relegated to the household once they are married. These girls are therefore much more open-minded, oriented outwardly to westernisation than their Hindu counterparts. Presumably, this greater sense of equality between boys and girls has something to do with Buddhism.

What about Maharjan (Jyāpu) peasants,[9] the largest Newar caste settled in villages as well as in urban centres, and situated in a middle position on the hierarchical scale of the Newar caste system? Women in these families behave in a quite free and outspoken manner. They smoke cigarettes and the hubble-bubble pipe *(hukā)* in public. They drink freely with men, alcohol as well as maize beer. They do not hesitate to have their say in discussions and also joke in public, even if persons from outside the household are present. Such behaviour is not considered improper in any sense. Older Maharjan women even crack jokes about sex in a crude manner. Broadly speaking, it is possible to assert that there is no strict separation of sexes in daily life. But a clear division of labour between males and females operates in economic and domestic activities. Women weave, cook, process beer and alcohol, transplant paddy in the fields. Men carry out basket- and all bamboo-work, they

9 Maharjan is the honorific term for the Jyāpu. These Newar farmers have a long-standing reputation of being hardy workers and skilled rice cultivators. Cf. Chapters 4 and 12.

build houses, hoe the land before sowing, and flood the fields.

Besides, the rate of divorce on the woman's initiative is higher among this agricultural caste than within other groups. In Pyangaon (Lalitpur District), the Maharjan village in which I did fieldwork in the early 1970s, 25 per cent of matrimonial unions were interrupted after some years of marriage, mainly due to quarrels within the family and/or elopement of the wife with another man. Women used to remarry freely, sometimes as the second wife *(lithu)* to a man.[10] They are not stigmatised and they do not lose their status. The family of the new husband will accept her and her children born from a previous marriage into their *guthi* religious association. However, according to traditional rules, children must return to their father's house when they reach the age of 16 (sometimes even 12).

Divorce is as far as possible an entirely internal affair, settled mostly within the village. If difficulties arise, the twelve headmen of the locality (in Pyangaon) must gather and decide on the procedure to be adopted. In very rare cases, a person appeals to the courts to solve the problem, expecting a penalty *(daṇḍa)* to be paid by the other party. As among other Newar castes, divorce is finalised by sending back to the boy's family the ten betel nuts which were given at marriage (New. *gway litay tayegu)*. The young woman then does not have to observe death pollution and may remarry. It should be noted in this respect that within all Maharjan communities, marriage rituals are limited to a minimum. The polygamous union of a man with a second wife is, in most cases, formalised with no ceremony at all. In Pyangaon, the twelve headmen of the village are just asked to consider the kinship relationship of the couple and give their agreement. No dowry (New. *kwasaḥ)* is expected from the second wife's paternal house as is the rule for a first marriage.

Moreover, Maharjan women are not concerned too much with the finer distinctions of purity, pollution, and commensal restraint observed by Śreṣṭhas and other high Hindu castes. They go about quite normally doing the daily chores. Very often, nobody in the household is aware that somebody is menstruating. Yet, in most cases they abstain from sexual intercourse during menstruation. Worshipping deities during that period is a debatable subject. It is widely asserted that menstruating women cannot make offerings to the house gods (deities). But some informants

10 Among Maharjans, as among other Newar castes, the custom for a man to simultaneously have two or three wives was (and still is) quite common.

claim that nobody cares about these taboos. In matters of widowhood, Maharjan villagers are less orthodox than higher Newar castes. As among Śreṣṭha and Parbatiyā families, widows from agricultural castes are not allowed to wear red clothes, but they are not considered entirely inauspicious. They can participate in ceremonies and rituals when they have finished their mourning period. However, widows are banned from filling the role of senior woman, *thakāli nakīṃ*, an important person in the patrilineage as we will see later. Remarriage is quite difficult for them, especially if they already have children.

Similarly, Maharjan women are economically and socially more independent from their husband's family than Śreṣṭha women. They maintain extremely strong relations and close affinity with their paternal family *(thaḥ chẽ)*. They visit their parents quite often and take refuge in their natal home as soon as a problem arises in their husband's family. This attachment of a married woman to her parents' home and the support she receives from it are very important in balancing the power position in her affinal family. Such close relations are widespread among all Newars, but they are nowhere stronger than among the Maharjan who choose a wife for their son in a much closer territorial unit than families from other castes. Geographical proximity between the in-laws strengthens the attachment of women to their father's family. Finally, peasant women take little part in political affairs, elections, meetings, etc, but are very active directly and indirectly in domestic and communal levels. As Pradhan (1981: 203) has noticed: 'Their power and influence in the community is not recognised, however, as legitimate authority in the society; they operate behind the man under the shield of his social dominance, both in familial as well in economic spheres.' Economically, their role in agriculture and farm management is crucial. For instance, Maharjan women are responsible for making all decisions on seed selection and play a commanding role in vegetable cultivation. Besides, the physical strength of Jyāpuni women is recognised by men. Female peasants are often seen carrying heavy loads from the fields as well as within the precincts of the village itself. They have earned respect from the community.

On the whole, Newar women from all castes, high or low, feel themselves to be in a better situation than Chetrī and Bāhun women. They are well informed about their legal rights and are prompt to defend their own interests against their husband's. This privileged situation is not totally new. Historically, it is established than Newar women had been entitled

to inheriting some shares from their parents. Kölver (1993) has shown that as early as the 17th century, such successions frequently included land. The relatively high status of Newar women in society and the ease with which divorce can be arranged have induced some authors to wrongly hypothesise the existence of a matriarchal state in ancient times, with dominance of the matrilineal line. It has also been speculated that some time in the past Newars practised polyandry. This was asserted by Kirkpatrick (1811: 187) and Hodgson (1880, 2: 129-130), two prominent British officials who were in Nepal at the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century, respectively. This theory of polyandry has been taken up in more recent times on false etymological grounds. Perhaps the supposed links of the Newars with the Nayars of South India have contributed to suggesting such a possibility. All this is totally wrong and is based on erroneous arguments.

Nonetheless, it must be said that Newar women are clearly under the domination of men, in daily life as well as in communal events. Hierarchically, men come first, according to seniority, women and children second. Among all castes, men eat first; women start eating only after the men of the household have finished their meal. More importantly, wives eat the polluted leftovers (New. *cipa)* of their husband. This is of central significance in Newar and Hindu culture and is synonymous with accepted inferiority. Besides, a wife should keep her husband to her right, to show respect, and is associated in ritual contexts with the left, which ranks, as everywhere else in South Asia, lower than the right. Among most of the Newar, before eating, a married woman has to touch the feet of her husband with her head, and also of her husband's mother and father, and others of the older generation within the household. I observed this mark of deference even in influential Hindu families of the Pyangaon Maharjan village. According to Gellner (1992: 27), the young newly married woman pays such obeisance to more people in her in-law's family than do Parbatiyās (Bāhun-Chetrī). Likewise, as everywhere else in Nepal, men control most of the links with the outside world. That is the reason why, until recently, Newar men were much more fluent in the Nepali language than the women. In the early 1970s, a great number of Maharjan women, even in the capital city of Kathmandu, only spoke their mother tongue (Newar). They knew only a few words of Nepali.

It should also be noted that male dominance is more pronounced among Newars than in Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups from the hills. The sexuality of the Newar woman, for instance, is much more under the

control of men than of girls from such groups as Tamangs or Gurungs. Furthermore, in all castes (with the exception perhaps of the untouchables), virginity at marriage still remains a positive value.

Male-female dichotomy in religion and social organisation

Let us turn now to the symbolic realm. In the following pages, I would like to explore some culturally determined ideas about gender in the Newar religion and their impact on the position of women in society. I am particularly interested in the exclusively male cults related to some specific ritual domains. I will take a closer look at the high degree of duality between the sexes in the symbolic and social context, especially among Maharjan peasants, in the light of my ethnography. My contention is that this dichotomy is crucial for a proper understanding of the position of women among Newars.[11] Recent transformations are also one of my main concerns. My aim is to study traditional institutions and values that have been governing Nepali society since the mid-20th century. Gender cannot be portrayed as a structure of static relations.

The feminine principle is given a preponderant role in Hinduism, which is at the basis of Newar religion. Goddesses are often presented as more powerful than gods. With their weapons, they appear as warrior deities, fighting the demons and the enemies of *dharma*. Their martial capacities often surpass those of males (Tawa-Lama 2001). Śiva, the male god, without his consort Śakti, the saying goes, is *sava*, a corpse. Śakti is essential for empowering a god. In Tantric ideology, the whole universe is seen as a balanced structure between male and female principles. The union between Śiva and Śakti through sexual intercourse is given paramount importance. It is regarded as nothing less than the restoration of a primeval state and is frequently depicted in religious iconography. Female sexuality is viewed positively here and linked to auspiciousness. It is a way of symbolically achieving the transcendence of time and the renewal of the cosmos. Even the creation of the world is comparable to a prolonged and varied sexual act. Priests believed that female deities are emitted as a kind of force, *śakti*, by Śiva and by other male benevolent gods. But most devotees consider goddesses as independent deities. Śāktism even consider Śakti (or Devī) as the supreme deity.

The highly Tantricised Newar pantheon itself is divided into gods and goddesses, masculine and female divinities. Dangerous, blood-thirsty

11 The material on which this study is based was collected over the years beginning in 1970 up to the present time.

goddesses are numerous in the Kathmandu Valley and play a central role in religion. They have come to dominate the socio-religious life of the Newar. Mātṛkās or Ajimās, for instance, who stand within and outside most Newar settlements, are worshipped by the whole population, male and female, irrespective of their caste affiliation or status. They protect the local people from diseases (in the past from epidemics), and provide an identity to each locality, distinct from those of nearby settlements. In the ancient capitals of the Malla kingdoms (Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu), Mātṛkās form a ring around the city protecting it from invasions and other disasters, such as destructive weather and external dangers. These capitals were also placed under the protection of Taleju, the patron goddess of the Malla royal family. This Tantric goddess, a secret form of Siddhilakṣmī, receives a buffalo sacrifice nearly every month from a religious association comprising most of the Newar castes living in the city. In the course of history, Taleju has defended her kingdom and her king from invaders. Her temple is situated in the centre of the town, within the precincts of the royal palace. It is from this goddess that the king largely receives his powers and his strength. As is often said, 'royal power is Śakti power'.[12] Woman's power is placed here at the centre of the public realm in a pre-eminent position.

Furthermore, the royal goddess Kumārī, a small girl chosen from among the Śākya or Vajrācārya Buddhist caste, plays a prominent role in the royal cult. She does not accept blood, but drinks alcohol and is considered by Hindu Tantric priests as an external manifestation of Taleju. She is a personification of maiden virginity. The royal goddess, who is separated from her parents and kept in a palace, is not only a curiosity for tourists. She has become an icon of the kingdom of Nepal.[13] However, it must be noted that these young girls are worshipped just for a certain period of time. They lose their divine status when they reach puberty and then they return to the real world. In other words, they are deified to the detriment of their femininity and of their sexual power, at least on the human plane.[14] Social activists at present question this royal

12 See, for instance, Marglin (1985: 300).

13 Besides, among Hindus and Buddhist families, several auspicious life-cycle rituals as well as other ceremonies end with the worship of Kumārī. The virgin goddess is represented on this occasion by a plate piled high with all the dishes to be served at the feast to follow (Gellner 1992: 87). This plate is then taken by the senior woman of the household to the traditional Kumārī family shrine.

14 On the symbolic plane, the Kumārī is believed to be the potential wife of the king. For more details on the subject, cf. Letizia (2003, Chapter 6).

tradition, especially the isolation of the little girl during the time she is regarded as a goddess. They speak of a 'lost childhood' and assert that 'it is a violation not only of the rights of the child, but of women's and human rights'. Times are changing...This rhetoric is typical of the post-Panchayat period. Yet the life of the living goddess is clearly a 'golden' one compared to the life of the great majority of Nepali girls of the same age. Besides, the royal Kumārī has never been totally cut off from her family. And neither is she shielded from modern life nowadays since she is tutored at home and also watches television.

Women play an active role in divinity worship and in all sorts of cultic activities. The daily rituals *(nitya pūjā)* to the household deities and to the local Gaṇeśa, Mātṛkā or Ajimā outside the house are their responsibility. They or their daughters execute them. From the age of five or six, small girls are taught the art of disposing of the various offerings on the ceremonial tray and the order according to which the different items of the *pūjā* must be placed on the altar. The importance of women in religious activities is revealed by the existence in every Newar household or lineage of a female leader, the *nakīṃ*, who is the senior woman. This leader has particularly important religious functions. She is in charge of most life-cycle rituals for family members, especially the rites for young children, such as purification after delivery, name-giving ceremony, feeding the baby with the first solid food, first head-shaving (for boys), etc. During these ceremonies, performed mostly without priests, she is the main officiant. On the Newar New Year's Day, at night, the senior woman has to worship each member of the household, starting with her husband and sons. This ritual, *mha pūjā*, is interpreted as helping to ensure long life and good fortune to family members. During marriage, the *nakīṃ* places a red mark on the bride's forehead and gives her gifts of clothes. Last but not least, it should be recalled that Tantric divinities are not only worshipped by male initiates. A wife also has the possibility of receiving the Tantric initiation, *dīkṣā,* linked to the deity of her husband's family. In most castes, the participation of women is required for ritual worship and the offerings to these deities.[15]

However, this centrality of Śakti in Tantric philosophy does not correspond to the position of females in Newar religion. In fact, it must be

15 Interestingly enough, Newar women are entitled to undergo the *burā jwāku* old-age ceremony, which confer an old person with a quasi-divine status even if her husband has passed away. But if the husband is still alive, the ceremony will be performed simultaneously for the couple. In that case, the date of the rituals will be determined by the age of the man.

remarked that Newar womenfolk are almost totally excluded from large sectors of religious activities (as are most Nepali women). Two distinct sacred spheres linked to male deities can be distinguished. Let us first take the activities of *guthi* religious associations. It is known from ethnographic research that *guthi* groups are crucial in Newar social life and religion (Chapter 9). Yet women rarely participate in such gatherings. They are particularly excluded in the case of funeral associations, *sī* or *sanāḥ guthi*, the most important *guthi* for Newars. In their strictest sense these funeral groupings deal with the cremation of community members alone, but, in reality, they have multiple roles in communal life such as the organisation of local festivals. With the exception of the wife of the man in charge of the association's annual feast, women are not allowed to enter the temporary shed made of wood and straw which is specially built once a year for this meeting (among Maharjan farmers). The reason behind the ban is the presence in this temporary construction of Sīdyaḥ, the death god of the association. This god of death is often identified with Bhairava (New. Bhailaḥdyaḥ), the fierce face of the god Śiva, represented with bared fangs and macabre ornaments, and whose vehicle, a hideous dog, is at home at the cremation grounds. Sīdyaḥ is much feared inside the group and kept with great care during the year in the house of the seniormost member of the association or in the house of the member in charge of the annual feast. Women are also banned from participating in the *sī kāḥ bhway*, the ceremonial eating of the head of the animal sacrificed to this deity, which normally concludes the annual feast. During this important ritual, the head of the sacrificial animal, a castrated goat or a buffalo, is cooked, divided into eight parts and eaten by the eight oldest men in the death society according to strict rules of sharing. The distribution of parts of the head enhances and legitimates the hierarchy within the group.

It is worth noting in this respect that women are excluded from all main death rituals. Wives, daughters and other female members of the family participate in the funeral procession that follows the corpse of the dead person, but they do not proceed up to the funeral pyre and do not attend the cremation itself. Some days after the death, they present their condolences to the bereaved family in a ritually prescribed manner, but they do not have any ritual to perform. As we saw above, the *nakīṃ*, the senior woman in the family, has important ritual duties during ceremonies associated with children and auspicious events. But she has no functions during death, the most inauspicious among the life-cycle rites. In

the same way, women are prohibited from attending animal sacrifices offered to the wild goddesses, Nava Durgās as well as Ajimās. Men, especially from the butcher caste (Nāy), are responsible for these sacrifices, which include manipulation of blood and butchering.

Women are also dissociated from another deity, Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the Newar's god of music and dance. This god, represented by holes and triangles in the walls of shrines and of private houses, is supposed to be an aniconic form of Naṭarāja, Śiva as the Lord of dance and music.[16] It is not improbable that an autochthonous, purely Newar divinity, is concealed behind this Hindu god and that identification with Śiva was added in more recent times. Whatever the case may be, Nāsaḥdyaḥ is of utmost importance among all Newar castes, especially among castes of musicians and dancers, such as Maharjan peasants and Gathu gardeners. Every Maharjan village, every Maharjan ward of the old urban centres has its own Nāsaḥdyaḥ altar from where all processions of musical instruments and all dances start. This god is supposed to give skill and effectiveness to public performers. *Nāsaḥ* itself, it must be recalled, means 'grace, skill in artistic performance' in the Newar language.

Learning music, the rehearsal of theatrical plays and religious dances[17] are placed under the tutelage of Nāsaḥdyaḥ and begin with offerings of flesh and alcohol on his altar. The god himself is transferred at the beginning of the apprenticeship from his temple to the house of the master of music or dance where the training takes place *(ākhāḥ chē)*. Similarly, the different periods of training, including the first public performance *(pidanegu)*, are marked by rituals performed in honour of Nāsaḥdyaḥ, with goat or chicken sacrifices. All these performances are secret and concealed from women. Women are not even allowed to touch the god. They will go 'mad' (New. *wī juigu)*, if they do so, it is said. They are not in a position to receive the supernatural power of the deity. A most dangerous item for trainees is the black mark, *mwaḥnī sinhaḥ*, made from soot collected from an oil lamp. This divine mark is of great importance to those undergoing training since they must wear it before practising their dance. The *mwaḥnī sinhaḥ* gives them a sort of divine status. They do not need to mourn if somebody dies in their family when they wear it. Indeed, the drum player or the dancer is often regarded as the incarna-

16 Nāsaḥdyaḥ is sometimes identified with Bhailaḥdyaḥ, the fierce form of Śiva, who requires animal sacrifices and who drinks alcohol.

17 In Newar, a single word is used to designate both theatrical play and religious dance: *pyākhā*.

tion of a divinity when performing his art. People say that half the soul of a masked dancer is the dancer's and the other half is the god's (Korwald 1994: 408). Women are not allowed to make this soot. If she wears it, she will become 'senseless', as is the case if she touches the god of music. Interestingly, the whole music apprenticeship period is seen as a long initiatory process and is impregnated by a masculine atmosphere. For instance, to please Nāsaḥdyaḥ, and therefore learn dancing and music quicker, the trainees have to steal animals (roosters or male goats). These animals are sacrificed to the god of music and eaten in the group. Women are not supposed to eat any meat from these animals. If a dancer is unable to steal an animal, he will become very slow at learning and will never become a graceful dancer (Shrestha 2002: 404).

In the old city of Kathmandu, the apprenticeship of *dhimay* drum patterns, which is considered the most sacred among the numerous membranophones of the Newar, occurs every twelve years. It is a highly ritualised process and it is preceded by complex ceremonies (Chapter 3). The teaching session of farmer boys is combined in this locality with teaching them how to wield the *dhunyā*, a long pole decorated with yak tails that leads the musical processions of Maharjan peasants in the streets of Kathmandu. The young students are also trained in some acrobatic exercises (of which there are twelve, including three-tiered human pyramids) which must be displayed to the whole Maharjan community on the last day of the tuition session. In full traditional dress, they demonstrate their skill with *dhunyā* poles on this occasion.

Interestingly, poles and acrobatics are linked to Hanumān, the 'monkey god' and mythical leader of large troops of ape-like creatures in Hindu mythology. In India as in Nepal, Hanumān is the patron of wandering acrobats and wrestlers. He is credited with supernatural strength. Among Newars, this folk-divinity is also viewed as the master of *tala*, 'the beat', 'the rhythm', and is associated with cymbals and metal discs beaten with a small hammer. The god, attached mainly to males, is much worshipped during these musical and acrobatic performances. The ability of the Maharjan acrobats and their success in producing human pyramids as well as other acrobatic figures derive from him. Significantly, the associations in charge of this apprenticeship are wholly masculine societies characterised by their intransigent anti-feminism. They maintain a great sense of male solidarity and a sharp line of demarcation between men and women.

Thus, music, acrobatics, and religious dances have something to do

with masculinity and male mystical power. Men hold all the roles in masked dances. The line-up is redistributed regularly among the dance group *(guthi)* according to ancient rules of inheritance. Everything indicates that men have invested this musical and choreographic sector of their culture and raised it to the level of a basic element of their social structure. As a matter of fact, music is a compulsory activity among Maharjan peasants. All young men of the village or of the ward must be trained in drum playing and acrobatics in order to be incorporated into his caste. This means that a boy needs to undergo this initiation in order to become a full member of his Maharjan parental grouping. In Kathmandu, initiation to drum playing is a crucial stage in socialisation and integration into society (Chapter 3). From the point of view of the community, training in musical instruments and the initiation to Nāsaḥdyaḥ's power are as important as the better-known *kaytā pūjā* male initiation ritual during which the boy receives his loin-cloth for the first time as a symbol of his entering adulthood. What is more, men have enclosed musical and dance-drama activities within male gender boundaries; they have erected fences around this field to defend it from women. They have their own secrets which are alleged to be potentially dangerous for females. They own unique rituals, dance steps, masks, and finally gods. It is probably for this reason that women are carefully barred from Nāsaḥdyaḥ and the diverse training processes. What we have here are crucial notions concerning the differences between gender and the roles of the sexes. The free participation of men and women in numerous ordinary contexts stands in opposition to male separateness in these ritual domains.

It is, therefore, no surprise that women are not allowed to learn and play music in Newar culture.[18] Traditionally, males play all musical instruments; drums as well as flutes and cymbals, idiophones as well as membranophones and aerophones. During the village's annual festival, *deś jātrā* or *mūl jātrā*, for instance, three ensembles *(khalaḥ)* of musicians take part: *dāphā khalaḥ* that plays drums, cymbals and the vertical flute *bay*; *bāṃsuri khalaḥ*, playing transverse flutes; and *dhimay khala* characterised by large *dhimay* drums *(tagwaḥ dhimay)* with two heads. These processional musical groups are in charge of enlivening the festival to create a pleasant atmosphere and to please the deities as well as the villagers. No women are directly involved. Females participate in the

18 The ban on playing music does not necessarily apply to the playing of western instruments.

collective ritual simply with their offering trays to the village gods, queued up in long lines in their nicest clothes and jewellery. As a matter of fact, among most Newar settlements, the cult of the local gods is intrinsically linked to death groups, *sī guthi* (Chapter 6), which, as we saw earlier, ban women. A set of ideas associating territory, local gods, death, dance and music with masculinity thus clearly appears within the Newar culture. These symbolic correlations are particularly in evidence among Maharjan peasants. On the other hand, a strong opposing link connects women, the daily cult of deities, life, socialisation of children and life-cycle rituals from birth until marriage.

The disjunction between these two different symbolic domains, male and female, in many ways contradict the eminent position of Śakti in Hindu and Buddhist conceptions. As a matter of fact, it can be understood as a gender-inflicted hierarchy which opposes the prevalence of women in other ritual spheres. This social and symbolic disjunction has not yet attracted enough attention and has not been systematically addressed. It is not merely an analytic imposition from the outside, but one deeply rooted in Newar culture.[19] My argument is that such a gendered dichotomy permeates the whole society and religious representations.

It is to be stressed that such a strict division of sex is specific to Newar society. It is conspicuous by its absence among Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups such as Tamangs and Gurungs. Until recently, these hill 'tribes' possessed mixed youth groups where both sexes met freely to sing, talk and joke. As is known, among Gurungs, these youth clubs, locally called *rodi*, not only organise songs and dances, but also small theatrical performances and comic acts (Andors 1974). Such mixed clubs would be unthinkable in traditional Jyāpu (Maharjan) society. Admittedly, Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups reserve some specific symbolic fields for men, such as the link to ancestral and territorial deities. But this division does not produce clear-cut boundaries in the social organisation as among the Newar.

Social change in gender polarity

In spite of these strong cultural patterns, important and rapid changes have occurred during the last two decades in the sex roles of Newars. The first move perhaps came from the *caryā* Buddhist dance. Tradition-

19 Opposition between these two sets of notions has nothing to do with the peaceful and dangerous qualities of human and divine beings. As a matter of fact, Newar women (as well as Indian and Nepali) are thought as fundamentally ambivalent. They embody benevolent and

ally, these esoteric dances were only performed within Tantric temples, in the presence of initiates. The masked dancers incarnating Buddhist deities were all males from the Vajrācārya priestly caste. Dances were performed on fixed dates of the religious calendar. But in the 1980s, a Vajrācārya priest (Ratnakaji Vajracharya) from Kathmandu decided to open the dance apprenticeship to non-Tantric initiates. He started teaching Hindu Newars, members of various castes, both men and women. Without much opposition from the community, he even started to teach this Buddhist choreography to westerners, some of whom were women. His aim was to stop these dances from disappearing due to the lack of candidates and interest among the Vajrācārya caste. Rapidly, another school has opened in Kathmandu at the Hotel Vajra. Public performances of Newar *caryā* dances are currently displayed in some hotels in Kathmandu for a foreign audience, and abroad, especially in Europe, in public theatres, on various occasions, such as festivals of traditional music. The transposition of *caryā* to the public stage as a non-ritual art form has saved this repertoire from decline but has involved important transformations (Widdess 1997: 18-19).

Meanwhile, Newar women from different castes have started to be taught traditional musical instruments. Numerous examples were reported to me during my recent travels to the Kathmandu Valley between 1998 and 2005. For instance, some Jyāpu women (Maharjan) from villages in the south of Lalitpur District (Sunaguthi, Theco) interested in music have learnt the *khīṃ*, *dhimay* and *dhāḥ* drums, as well as cymbals.[20] They now participate as musicians in local festivals, even in the *dyaḥ lhāygu*, a ritual invocation to Nāsaḥdyaḥ of the utmost importance which has to be performed at the beginning of any musical performance. A recent visit to the village of Bosigan (Kathmandu District), near Kirtipur, revealed the presence of a dozen Jyāpu women playing the traditional *bāṃsuri* flute during festivals. These female players started to be taught in 2001 by one of the two *bāṃsuri* gurus (teachers) in the locality. They play music especially during local festivals and the Newar New Year *(bhintunā*: 'Good wishes!'). The same process has occurred in the village of Bungamati (Lalitpur District).

In Kathmandu and in Lalitpur (Patan) as well, Maharjan women have

malevolent qualities. They incorporate auspicious and inauspicious aspects. The village goddesses themselves can both inflict and cure suffering, they have both pacific and awe-inspiring manifestations.

20 But, interestingly enough, not the village of Pyangaon.

started to learn the drums and cymbals. In these two urban localities, however, such *dhimay* apprenticeships is limited to the small drum *(cigwaḥ dhimay)* only and not to the bigger one *(tagwaḥ dhimay)*, which is considered more sacred and which, in most cases, is not allowed to be taken outside the boundaries of the ward (New. *twāḥ)*. In Lalitpur, out of the 45 farmer wards, five have begun to teach *dhimay* music to young women (February 2005). At present, women from this old Newar urban settlement play the *dhimay* and cymbals during the Rāto Matsyendranāth procession which takes place every year from April to June. Some of them even dance while playing. An (unmarried) educated 24-year-old woman explained to me that one of her motivations 'was to make as good music as the men'. She learnt to play the *dhimay* with other mena and women during a six-month session. Similarly, out of the 32 Maharjan wards in Kathmandu, four have already started to teach musical instruments to women (February 2005). A competition of about twenty groups of female *dhimay* drum-players took place in the capital in 2004. It included women from other Newar castes (Śreṣṭha for instance) and other ethnic groups, such as the Tamang, who do not traditionally play this type of drum. It was organised by the Pukudyā Maharjan tol (=Khica Pokari), in the old city of Kathmandu. Women from other Newar castes, such as the Nāy butchers and Mānandhar oil-pressers, have also started to be trained in traditional musical instruments attached to their caste.

It is, therefore, clear that the strict exclusion of womenfolk from making music is no longer upheld.[21] Interestingly, these changes have not been introduced against the male gurus' will, but in agreement with them, even if some of them are still reluctant. My informants were embarrassed when I asked if these women were allowed to pay their respects to the Nāsaḥdyaḥ god and to make offerings to him. As far as I know, women are still banned from participation in the male-controlled rituals linked to music apprenticeship. In most localities, they are also banned from touching Nāsaḥdyaḥ and from directly receiving prasād, the offerings to the god. But some Maharjan groups authorise some form of contact between the female musicians and the god. Whatever the case, a German ethnomusicologist opened a music school in Bhaktapur, which hastened the pace of these remarkable changes. From there, the trend is spreading to other settlements. At present, more and more women are

21 Grandin (1994: 162) provides similar indications regarding Kirtipur city, but, unfortunately, with few details.

learning music on traditional Newar musical instruments.

These changes in the social construction of gender differences were possible only because of the overall radical transformations in Nepali society in the Kathmandu Valley over the last four decades. To restrict ourselves to gender issues, it can be said first of all that the female literacy rate has improved noticeably since 1960 in this valley. Educational achievement is presently a tangible fact nearly everywhere in the Kathmandu Valley, despite ongoing inequalities between boys and girls in some places. Education has benefitted girls (who were totally illiterate till some decades ago) on a large scale. Most women now have access to knowledge, economic resources and health care besides enjoying personal autonomy. Some of them, including even Maharjan women, have attained high-status positions in government and private service sectors. The tourism industry, local administration, and teaching jobs, in particular, have given them new opportunities.

Family planning (Pariwār Niyojan) has also greatly empowered Newar women in urban and rural areas. New techniques, such as the three-month injection for women (called *saṅginī* in Nepali), have become popular. They give unprecedented freedom to women to decide when to have children. It must be admitted that, until now, young women very rarely consulted family planning centres before or during their first years of marriage. But among Maharjans as well as among other urban castes, more and more women now visit these clinics after having two children, especially after the birth of a son. A survey conducted in 2005 in the village of Pyangaon showed that 70 per cent of young married women regularly visited family planning centres.

Substantial changes have also occurred within the family sphere. Among the Maharjan community for instance, marriages take place at a later age than before. This is the case both for the bride and the groom. Formerly, child marriages occurred from time to time. They are totally prohibited today. Besides, the agreement of the boy and the girl is nowadays obtained in a much more systematic manner than before. Forced marriages are less frequent than in the 1970s. The result of these changes is an overall decrease in divorce. Boys and girls are today more confident and mature when they marry. They are less likely to reconsider their choice after some years of marriage. This transformation in the pattern of social relations is a general trend, which applies to all areas of the Valley.

At the same time, westernisation has introduced new models and val-

ues. The growing consumption of mass media products like TV, radio, movies, videos and so on has induced new lifestyles. All this has broadened the horizons of women's experience and undermined the traditional patriarchal social structure. Without such an encounter with a changing socio-cultural environment, few changes such as the ones studied in this work might have occurred. Likewise, the adoption by young Nepali girls of western clothes, especially trousers and jeans, instead of the traditional sari or *suruwāl* (baggy trousers) imported from India, has weakened the old division of dress between the sexes, at least in urban areas. Admittedly, middle-aged women's fashions have resisted westernisation and the sari or the Punjabi *salwar-kameez* has remained the preference of most females, in strong contrast to China and Japan (Whelpton 2005: 160). But the *patasi*, the long sari-like black wraparound with a red border, which was worn by all women from the Maharjan farmer caste until the 1970s, is at present worn only on festive and ceremonial occasions as a marker of 'ethnic' and caste identity. In daily life, Maharjan women nowadays dress in skirts and blouses similar to other Newar and Parbatiyā castes. They are consequently less identifiable with their specific, often despised, agricultural caste.

The role of women's rights activists also has to be considered. The rise of such groups dates from the restoration of democracy in 1990. Hundreds of these non-governmental organisations are at present based in the capital, Kathmandu. They have played the role of pressure groups in 'gender awareness' and mainstreaming gender. They have raised some specific issues, such as 'marital rape', which was unthinkable to speak about overtly in the past. I was much impressed by the impact of these new ideas during recent interviews I conducted with Jyāpunis. Newar women are much more socially active than before. They are less marginalised. They express the wish to follow a career outside the sector in which they were traditionally attached; they take initiatives on their own. They raise their voice and dare to speak in a much more open way than before. Feminist associations also have a powerful transforming effect and have influenced policy-makers. They have clearly encouraged the government to adopt the new legal dispositions in favour of women which I referred to in the beginning of this chapter.

Various studies have stressed the crucial role of women in transforming society. This role has been important at all times. Let me take a minor example from ethnographic data I collected outside the Kathmandu Valley. In the upper Ankhu Khola Valley (Dhading District), I was struck

by the fact that Tamang women have been the source of the most important changes that have occurred in agriculture since the beginning of the 20th century. The introduction of new seeds, plants, and new crop rotations have been mainly due to newly married brides coming from a village more advanced in the production system in one way or another. The present study confirms this ability of women to make use of external influences. In the present Newar case, they were able to change their social structure from the inside over a surprising short period of time and to question important structural elements of the cultural system in which they live. As a matter of fact, they transgress inherited social norms and values more readily at present.

The participation of young women from the hills in the Maoist insurgency against the Nepali security forces and the government is another example of such a trend. It is difficult to appreciate the terms and the forms of this involvement for now. Young women are not only used as cultural activists, nurses for wounded *maobadi* (Maoists) but also as fighters, leaders and commanders of guerrilla squads.[22] They are invariably represented in combat fatigues casually carrying guns (Sharma 2004). But, notwithstanding the use of terror and extortion by Maoists to achieve their objectives, some village women, especially the young belonging to lower status groups, support a political movement which is fighting against gender discrimination and which demonstrates an interest in the actual situation of women in rural areas. Obviously, this involvement in the Maoist army will entail radical changes in the social structure of the districts concerned.[23]

22 We do not have a great deal of information on the ethnic origin of the women enrolled into the Maoist army. But from what has been published, it seems that very few Newar women (an ethnic group living mainly in towns and bazaars) are involved in the rebellion. Even in Dolakha, where a *jan sarkār* ('people's government') was implemented in 2001 by the Maoists, the Newar, who form an important part of the local population, remain largely outside the rural sphere of Maoist influence (Shneiderman and Turin 2004: 102).

23 The exodus of men from the villages due to the Maoist insurgency has forced women in many places to abandon tradition, even with regard to the final rites after a person's death. Since there are no more young men left in the villages, women are forced to carry dead bodies and cremate them—an activity that Parbatiyā as well as Newar women have traditionally been strictly barred from carrying out. These changes challenge the traditional construction of gender in Nepal. Since this chapter was written (September-October 2004), huge demonstrations of women have taken place in various districts, especially in Dullu-Dailekh (2005), against the violence perpetrated by the Maoists.

Conclusion

The interplay between gender, religion and socio-economic transformation in developing countries is a complex and debatable topic which deserves more inquiry and research. The limited changes documented in this study just demonstrate unequivocally that women are key players in socio-economic development. In addition, it indicates that relationships between male and female are presently facing new opportunities, structural transformations, and constant movement. In Nepal, as everywhere else in Asia, novel gender identities arise principally when modernity impinges on tradition and when complex cultural forms, permeated by westernisation and globalisation, become largely accessible to the members of a specific group. These changes, accelerated by the action of new feminist associations, may lead to radical alterations in sex roles and gender polarity.

It has been shown that the so-called 'modernisation process' in some cases entails a degradation of women's status and life. Evidently, a similar statement may be made regarding many sectors of Nepali (and Indian) social life, especially through the introduction of paid employment. Nonetheless, as far as the Kathmandu Valley is concerned, increased contact with the outside world has conveyed, by and large, a betterment of women's status and greater equality between men and women. Admittedly, this valley is particularly rich; the average income of its inhabitants is more than three times more than in other rural districts of Nepal. Likewise, Newars are a privileged group in Nepal; one of the leading ethnic communities of the country, they are part of the political and cultural elite of the kingdom. Our conclusions therefore cannot be generalised to the rest of the country. But everything indicates that among the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley, changes have benefitted women from all castes, even if the top layers have more rapidly seized new opportunities than disadvantaged and marginal groups. Methodologically, it is clear that asymmetrical gender relations have to be studied in connection with class and caste relations.

By and large, social change in the Kathmandu Valley has undermined some privileges associated for a long time with men but without totally abolishing male dominance. The point to be further documented is whether patriarchal control over women in the name of religion will not be reasserted through other means and norms. More broadly, it remains to be studied how Newar and other Nepali women will overcome the traditional male monopolisation of socially powerful roles and the cur-

rent discrimination against them. Their ability to conduct this struggle will shape the future configuration of Nepali society.

Bibliography

Allen, Michael. 1975. *The Cult of Kumari: Virgin Worship in Nepal.* Kathmandu: Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, University Press, Tribhuvan University.

Allen, Nick. J. 1975. 'Byansi Kinship Terminology: A Study in Symmetry', *Man* (NS). no. 10, pp. 80-94.

____. 1976. 'Approaches to illness in the Nepalese hills'. In *Social Anthropology and Medecine*, edited by J.B. Loudon, pp. 500-552. London: Academic Press,

Allen, Nick, J. 1978. 'Fourfold Classifications of Society in the Himalayas'. In *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface*, edited by James F. Fisher, pp. 7-25. The Hague/Paris: Mouton.

Anderson, Mary N. 1971 (reprint 1977). *The Festivals of Nepal.* Calcutta: Rupa.

Andors, E. 1974. ' The Rodighar and Its Role in Gurung Society'. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies.* 1:1, pp. 10-24.

Aubert, Laurent. 1988. 'Les musiciens dans la société néwar'. Contribution à l'ethnographie de la vallée de Kathmandou'. *Bulletin de la Société d'ethnographie* (Genève) 30, pp. 31-67.

Aziz, Barbara. 1978. *Tibetan Frontier Families (Reflections of Three Generations from D'ing-ri).* New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Babb, Lawrence A. 1975. *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bake, A.A. 1961. 'Quelques éléments religieux dans le théâtre indien'. In *Les théâtres d'Asie*, published by A. Jacquot, pp. 41-48. Paris: Éd. du CNRS.

Banerjea, J.N. 1974. *The Development of Hindu Iconography.* New Delhi: Munshiram

Manoharlal Publishers.

Barré Vincent, et al. 1981. *Panauti, une ville au Népal*. Paris: Berger-Levrault.

Barth, Fredrick (ed). 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Bennett, Lynn. 1978. 'Maiti-Ghar: The Dual Role of High Caste Women in Nepal'. In *Himalayan Anthropology. The Indo-Tibetan Interface*, edited by James F. Fisher, pp. 121-140. The Hague-Paris: Mouton,

Bennett, Lynn (with the assistance of S. Singh). 1979. *Tradition and change in the legal status for Nepalese women*. Kathmandu: Center for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University.

Bennett, Lynn. 1983. *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-caste Women in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Biardeau, Madeleine. 1972. *Clefs pour la pensée hindoue*, Paris, Seghers. [Reprinted: *L'Hindouisme, Anthropologie d'une civilisation*, Paris, Flammarion, coll. "Champs", 1981].

____. 1978. 'Review of A. Hiltebeitel'. *The Ritual of Battle, L'Homme*, XVIII:1and2, pp. 208-214.

Bista, Dor Bahadur. 1991. *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's struggle for modernization*. Calcutta: Orient Longman.

Bista, Khem Bahadur. 1972. *Le culte du Kuldevata au Népal, en particulier chez certains Kṣatri de la vallée de Kathmandu*. Paris: Nove (Cahier népalais).

Blackburn, Stuart H. 1983. 'Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism', *History of Religions*, 24:3, pp. 255-274.

Blunt, E.A.H. 1931, *The Caste System of Northern India*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Bouillier, Véronique. 1979. *Naître renonçant. Une caste de Sannyasi villageois au Népal central*. Nanterre: Laboratoire d'ethnologie.

Bouillier, Véronique, 1991. 'Growth and Decay of a Kanphata Yogi Monastery in South-West Nepal'. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*. 28:2, pp. 151-170.

Bouillier, Véronique. 1993. 'Une caste de Yogi Néwar: les Kusle-Kāpālī', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*. 80:1, pp. 75-106.

Burghart, Richard. 1984. 'The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal'. *Journal of Asian Studies*. 44:1, pp. 101-125.

Caplan, Lionel. 1974. 'A Himalayan People: Limbus of Nepal'. In *South Asia: Seven Community Profiles*, edited by C. Maloney, pp. 173-201. New York: Holt, Rinehard and Wintson.

Carrin-Bouez, Marine. 1986. *La Fleur et l'os. Symbolisme et rituel chez les Santal*. Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales ('Cahiers de l'Homme', ns., 26).

Chakravarti, C. 1963. *Tantras: Studies on their Religion and Literature*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak.

Chattopadhyay, K.P. 1980. *An Essay on the History of Newar Culture*. Kathmandu: Educational Entreprise (reprinted from *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 19/10, 1923).

Clarke, Graham. 1980. 'The Temple and Kinship among a Buddhist People of the Himalaya', PhD thesis submitted to Oxford (Lincoln College).

Clarke, Graham. 1995. 'Blood and Territory as Idioms of National Identity in Himalayan States', *Kailash*. 17:3/4, pp. 89-131.

Daniel, E. Valentine. 1984. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Das, Veena. 1977 (1982). *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Des Chene, Mary. 1998. 'Fate, Domestic Authority, and Women's Wills', In *Selves in Time and Place: Identities Experience, and History in Nepal*, edited by D. Skinner, A. Pach, and D. Holland. Lanhman: Rowman and Littlewood.

A Dictionary of Classical Newari, compiled from manuscripts sources. 2000. Edited by Nepāl Bhāṣā Dictionary Committee, Cwasā Pāsā, Kathmandu: Modern Printing Press.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 1987. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Doherty, V.S. 1978. 'Notes on the origin of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal'. In *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface*, edited by James F. Fisher. The Hague/Paris: Mouton.

Dollfus, Pascale. 1989. *Lieux de neige et de genévriers : Organisation sociale et religieuse des communautés bouddhistes du Ladakh*. Paris: Ed. du CNRS.

Drekmeier, C. 1958. *Kingship and Community in Early India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Driem, von George. 2001. *Languages of the Himalayas* (2 vols). Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Dumont, Louis. 1957. *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud. Organisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar*. Paris/The Hague: Mouton.

____. 1964. 'Marriage in India: The Present State of the Question: Postscript to Part I: Nayar and Newar'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 7, pp. 77-98.

____. 1966 (1979). *Homo hierarchicus. Essai sur le système des castes*. Paris: Gallimard.

____. 1975. 'Terminology and Prestations Revisited'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 9:2, pp. 197-215.

____. 1980*a*. *Homo hierachicus, The Caste System and its Implication*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

____. 1980*b*. 'La dette vis-à-vis des créanciers et la catégorie de *sapiṇḍa*'. In *La dette*, edited by C. Malamoud, pp. 15-37. Paris : EHESS (Purushartha, 4).

Dumont, Louis and David F. Pocock. 1957. 'Village Studies'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 1, pp. 23-41.

Dumézil, Georges. 1968. *Mythe et épopée*, I: *L'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les peuples indo-européens*. Paris : Gallimard.

Dyczowski, M.S.G. 2001. *The Cult of the Goddess Kubjika. A Preliminary Comparative Textual and Anthropological Survey of a Secret Newar Goddess*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Ellingson, T. 1990. 'Nāsa:dya: Newar God of Music. A Photo Essay'. *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, 8:22, pp. 1-272.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1962. 'The Divine Kingdom of the Shilluk of the Sudan'. In *Essays in Social Anthropology*. London : Faber (Frazer Lecture, 1948).

Fisher, William. F. 2001. *Fluid Boundaries. Forming and Transforming Identity in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fuller, Chris J. (ed). 1996. *Caste Today*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Fürer-Haimendorf, C. von. 1956. 'Elements of Newar Social Structure'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 86, pp. 15-38.

_____. 1974. 'A Central Indian Tribal People: The Raj Gonds'. In *South Asia. Seven Community Profiles*, edited by C. Maloney, pp. 202-257. New York: Holt, Reihnardt and Winston.

Fürer-Haimendorf, C. von. 1979. *The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh: Tradition and Change*, pp. 363-93. London: G. Allen and Unwin,

Gaborieau, Marc. 1972. 'Muslims in the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. (December), pp. 84-105.

Gaborieau, Marc. 1977. *Minorités musulmanes dans le royaume hindou du Népal*. Nanterre, Université de Paris X, Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, Klinskieck.

Gellner, David. 1986. 'Language, Caste, Religion and Territory: Newar Identity ancient and modern'. *European Journal of Sociology*. 27, pp. 102-148.

_____. 1987. 'Monk, Householder, and Priest. Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual', PhD thesis submitted to Oxford, St. John's College.

_____. 1991. 'Hinduism, Tribalism and the Position of Women: The Problem of Newar identity'. *Man*. 26:1, pp. 105-125.

_____. 1992. *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1995*a*. 'Introduction'. In *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 1-37. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

_____. 1995*b*, 'Low Castes in Lalitpur'. In *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 264-297. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

_____. 1997. 'Caste, Communalism, and Communism: Newars and the Nepalese sate'. In *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka

and J. Whelpton, pp. 151-184. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

____. 1999. 'From Cultural Hierarchies to a Hierarchy of Multiculturalisms: The Case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley'. In *Multiculturalism: Modes of Coexistence in South and Southeast Asia*. edited by SPF, pp. 103-163. Washington CC: Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA.

Gellner, David and Rajendra Pradhan. 1995, 'Urban Peasants: The Maharjans (Jyāpu) of Kathmandu and Lalitpur'. In *Contested Hierarchies*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 158-185. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gellner, David N. and Quigley, Declan, (eds). 1995. *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gernet, Jacques. 1994. *L'intelligence de la Chine. Le social et le mental.* Paris: Gallimard.

Ghosh, P. 1871. *Durga Puja: With notes and illustrations*. Calcutta: Hindoo Patriot Press.

Gilbert, K. 1993. 'Legal Rights and Social Strategies: An Ethnographic History of Family Law in Modern Nepal', PhD thesis submitted to Yale University.

Gonda, Jan. 1962. *Les religions de l'Inde, i. Védisme et hindouisme ancient.* Paris: Payot.

____. 1965, *Les religions de l'Inde, ii. L'hindouisme recent.* Paris: Payot.

____. 1970. *Visnuism and Sivaism: A Comparison*. London: The Athlone Press.

Grandin, Ingmar. 1989. *Music and Media in Local Life. Music Practice in a Newar Neighbourhood in Nepal.* Linköping: Linköping University.

Greenwold, S.M. 1974. 'Buddhist Brahmans'. *Archives européennes de sociologie*, 15, pp. 101-103.

Grierson, G.A. 1909. *Linguistic Survey of India, III : Tibeto-Burman Families*, Part I. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing.

Gupta, S. and R. Gombrich. 1986. 'Kings, Power and the Goddess'. *South Asia Research*, 2:2, pp. 123-138.

Gutschow, Niels. 1979*a*. 'Der Newarische Maler'. *Tribus* (Linden Museum, Stuttgart), 28, pp. 53-61.

____. 1979*b*. 'Kathmandu. Historical Development, Spatial Structure, Social and Ritual Topography'. In *Khumbu Himal*, 13:3, pp. 247-251. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.

Gutschow, Niels. 1980. 'Functions of Squares in Bhaktapur'. In *Traditional Concepts of Ritual Space India: Studies in Architectural Anthropology*, edited by J. Pieper, pp. 57-64. London: Art and Archeology Research Papers (AARP, 17).

____. 1982. *Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-Tal.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Gutschow, Niels and Kölver, Bernhard. 1975. *Bhaktapur. Ordered Space Concepts and Functions in a Town of Nepal.* Wiesbaden : Franz Steiner Verlag.

Hasrat, R.L. 1970. *History of Nepal, as Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*. Hoshiarpur, Punjab: V.V. Research Insitute book Agency.

Heine-Geldren, R. 1942. 'Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia'. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*. 2, pp. 15-30.

Herdick, R. 1987. 'Death Rituals in Kirtipur in Relation to Urban Space'. In *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by N. Gutschow and A. Michaels, pp. 237-275. Sankt Augustin: V.G.H. Wissenschaftsverlag.

Héritier, Françoise. 1995. *Masculin/Féminin. La pensée de la différence*. Paris: Éd. Odile Jacob.

Hocart, Arthur M. 1938. *Les Castes*. Paris : P. Geuthner.

____. 1970. *Kings and Councillors*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Hodgson, B.H. (n.d.). 'Hodgson papers', unpublished, vol. 9. London: Indian Office Library,

Hodgson, Brian, H. 18 'On the Physical Geography of the Himalayas'. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. 18, 4, pp. 761-787.

Hodgson, Brian H. 1857. 'Comparative Vocabulary of the Languages of the Broken Tribes of Nepal'. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. 26, 5, pp. 317-349.

____. 1880. *Miscellanous essays relating to Indian subjects* (2 vols). London: Trübner and Co.

Hoek, Albertus Wilhemus (Bert) van den. 2004. *Caturmasa. Celebrations of death in Kathmandu, Nepal*. Leiden: CNWS Publications.

Hoek, A.W. van den and Bal Gopal Shrestha. 1992. 'The Sacrifice of Serpents: Exchange and Non-Exchange in the Sarpabali of Indrayani'. *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 71, pp. 57-75.

Hoerburger, Felix. 1971. *Nepal. Musik der Nevārī-Kasten*. Klangdokumente zur Musikwissenschaft, Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde.

Höfer, A. 1979. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*, Khumbu Himal, 2, Lieferung. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.

Hudson, Dennis D. 1993. 'Madurai: The City as Goddess'. In *Urban Form and Meaning in South Asia. The Shaping of Cities from Prehistoric to Precolonial Times*, edited by H. Spodek and D.M. Srinivasan, pp. 125-142. Washington: National Gallery of Art.

Hulin, Michel (transl.). 1979. *Tripurarahasya, la doctrine secrète de la déesse Tripura*. Paris: Fayard.

Inden, R.B. 1976. *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ishii, Hiroshi. 1987. 'Social Change in a Newar Village'. In *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by Niels Gutschow and Axel Michaels, pp. 335-354. Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.

____. 1995. 'Caste and Kinship in a Newar Village'. In *Contested Hierarchies. A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 109-157. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

____. 1996. 'Sana-guthi (Funeral Organizations) in a Newar Village; Characteristics and Change'. In *Change and Continuity. Studies in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by S. Lienhard, pp. 39-55. Torino: Edizzioni dell'Orso,

Jamin, Jean. 1977. *Les lois du silence. Essai sur la fonction sociale du sacré*. Paris: Maspero.

Jones, Rex L. and S.K. Jones. 1976. *The Himalayan Woman: A Study of Limbu Women in Marriage in Divorce*. Paolo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Joshi, S. 2001. '*Cheli-beti* discourses of trafficking and constructions of gender, citizenship and nation in Modern Nepal'. *South Asia*. 24, pp. 157-175.

Joshi, Vaidya Panna Prasad. 1956. *Saṃksipta Nepāl Bhāṣā Śabda-koś (Newari-Nepali)*, (2012 vs).

Kane, P.V. 1941. *History of the Dharmaśāstras* (5 vols.). Poona: Bhandarkar Research Institute.

Karki, A. and D. Seddon (eds). 2003. *The People's war in Nepal: Left perspectives*. Delhi: Adroit Publishers.

Kirkpatrick, William. 1811. *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, being the substance of observations made during a mission to that country in the year 1793*. London: W. Miller.

Kölver, Bernhard. 1993. 'A field held by a woman, or A Case of Evasion of Hindu Law'. In *Nepal, Past and Present*, edited by G. Toffin, pp. 35-45. Paris: CNRS Editions.

Kölver, Ulrike and Ishwarananda Shresthacarya. 1994. *A Dictionary of Contemporary Newari: Newari-English*. Bonn : VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.

Korwald, T. 1994. 'The Dancing Gods of Bhaktapur and their Audience'. In *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes*, edited by M. Allen, pp. 404-415. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.

Krauskopff, Gisèle. 1987. 'Naissance d'un village Tharu; à propos des rites de claustration villageoise'. *L'Ethnographie*. 83:100-101, pp. 131-158.

Krauskopff, Gisèle. 2003. "An 'Indigenous Minority' in a Border Area: Tharu Ethnic Associations, NGOs, and the Nepalese State". In *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences*, edited by David Gellner, pp. 199-243. New-Delhi: Social Science Press.

Lamaison, Pierre. 1987. 'La notion de maison: Entretien avec Lévi-Strauss'. *Terrain*, 9, pp. 34-39.

Letizia, Chiara. 2003. *La dea bambina: Il culto della Kumari e la regalità in Nepal*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Leuchtag, E. 1958. *With a King in the Clouds*. London: Hutchinson.

Lévi, Sylvain. 1905-1911. *Le Népal. Étude historique d'un royaume hindou* (3 vols.). Paris: E. Leroux.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1991. 'Maison'. In *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie*, edited by P. Bonte and M. Izard, p. 436. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Levine, Nancy E. 1988. *The Dynamics of Polyandry: Kinship, Domesticity, and Population on the Tibetan Border*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levy, Robert I. with Rajopadhyaya K.R. 1990. *Mesocosm : Hinduism and the Organization of Traditional Newar City in Nepal*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lewis, Ioan. 1971. *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lewis, Todd T. 1984. 'The Tudadhars of Kathmandu: A Study of Buddhist Tradition in a Newar Merchant Community', PhD thesis submitted to Columbia, University Microfilms International.

____. 1995, 'Buddhist Merchants in Kathmandu: The Asan Twah Market and Uray Social Organization'. In *Contested Hierarchies : A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 38–79. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lie, Benedicte. 1999. 'Born to be a Butcher: A Study of Social Mobility and Symbolic Struggles of Low Castes in the Kathmandu Valley', PhD thesis submitted to University of Bergen.

Lienhard, Siegfried and Thakur Lal Manandhar. 1988. *Nepalese Manuscripts, part 1: Nevari and Sanskrit*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Locke, John T. 1973. *Rato Matsyendranath of Patan and Bungamati*. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies.

____. 1980. *Karunamaya: The Cult of the Avalokiteśvara-Matsyendranāth in the Valley of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan.

Locke, John T. 1985. *The Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan.

Locke, John T. 1989. 'The Unique Feature of Newar Buddhism'. In *The Buddhist Heritage*, edited by T. Skorupski, pp. 71-116. Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Macdonald, Alexander W. 1975. *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Macdonald, Alexander W. and Anne Vergati. 1979. *Newar Art: Nepalese Art during the Malla Period*. Warmintser: Aris and Phillips.

Macdonall, Arthur A. 1929. *A Pratical Sanskrit Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.

Maine, Henry. 1861 (1912). *Ancient Law*. London: John Murray.

Malamoud, Charles. 1982. 'Les morts sans visage. Remarques sur l'idéologie

funéraire dans le brāhmanisme'. In *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*, pp. 441-453. Paris: Cambridge University Press/Éditions de la MSH.

Malla, Kamal P. 1982. *Classical Newari Literature. A Sketch.* Kathmandu: Educational Enterprise.

Manandhar, Sushila. 1987. 'Vajravārāhīko jātrā: ek paricaya'. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. 14:3, pp. 229-238.

Manandhar, Sushila. 1998. *Bijoux et parures traditionnels des Néwar au Népal: une approche anthropologique et historique* (2 vols.). PhD thesis submitted to Université of Paris, Nanterre.

Manandhar, Thakur L. 1986. *Newari-English Dictionary: Modern Language of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by A. Vergati. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan.

Marglin, Frédérique A. 1985. *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasi of Puri*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Messerschmidt, Donald. A. 1976. *The Gurungs of Nepal. Conflict and Change in a Village Society*. Warmintser: Aris and Phillips.

Miller, Beatrice. 1956. 'Ganye and Kidu: Two Formalised System of Mutual Aid among the Tibetans'. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*. 12, pp. 157-170.

Monier-Williams, M. 1899 (1970). *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Müller-Böker, Ulrike. 1984. *Die Ländlichen Newar-Siedlungen im Kathmandu-Tal*. Giessen, Selbstverlag der Geographischen Instituts der J.L. Universität.

____. 1986. 'Interpretation of Cadastral Maps and Land Registers. Examples from the Kathmandu Valley and Gorkha'. In *Recent Research on Nepal*, edited by Klaus Seeland, pp. 141-155. München: Weltforum Verlag.

____. 1988. 'Spatial Organization of a Caste Society: The Example of the Newar in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal'. *Mountain Research and Development*. 8:1, pp. 23-31.

Mus, Paul. 1935. *Barobudur: Esquisse d'une histoire du bouddhisme fondée sur la critique archéologique des textes*. Hanoï : Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient.

____. 1977. *L'angle de l'Asie*. Paris: Hermann.

Nebesky-Wojkowitz, René de. 1956. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet (the Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities)*. Den Haag: Mouton.

Nepali, Gopal Singh. 1965. *The Newars: An ethno-sociological study of a Himalayan community*. Bombay: United Asia Publications.

Oldfield, Henry Ambrose. 1880. *Sketches from Nipal* (2 vols). London: W.H. Allen.

Parry, Jonathan. 1980. 'Ghosts, Greed and Sin: The Occupational Identity of the Benares Funeral Priests'. *Man*. 15, pp. 88-111.

____. 1982. 'Sacrificial Death and the Necrophagous Ascetics'. In *Death and the regeneration of life*, edited by M. Bloch and J. Parry, pp. 74-110.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paudyal, Damodar. 1987 (2044 BS). *Samāj ra Rāṣtrako Utthānamā Guṭhiko Bhumikā*. Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy.

Petech, Luciano. 1958 (reprint 1982). *Mediaeval History of Nepal (c. 750-1480)*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

Pettigrew, J. 2003. 'Guns, Kinship, and Fear: Maoists among the Tamu-mai (Gurungs)'. In *Resistance and the State: Nepalese experiences*, edited by D. Gellner, pp. 305-325. Delhi: Social Science Press.

Pocock, David F. 1960. 'Sociologies: Urban and Rural'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 4, pp. 63-81.

Pradhan, Bena. 1981. *The Newar Women of Bulu: The Status of Women in Nepal*, vol. II, part 6. Kathmandu: Centre of Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University.

Pradhan, Rajendra. 1986. 'Domestic and Cosmic Rituals among the Hindu Newars of Kathmandu', PhD thesis submitted to Delhi School of Economics, Department of Sociology.

Quigley, Declan. 1984. *The Social Structure of a Newar Trading Community, East-Central Nepal*, PhD thesis submitted to London.

Quigley, Declan. 1985. 'The Guthi Organization of Dhulikhel Shresthas'. *Kailash*. 1-2, pp. 5-61.

____. 1986. 'Introversion and Isogamy: Marriage Patterns of the Newars of Nepal'. *Contributions to India Sociology*. 20:1, pp.75-95.

____. 1995. 'Conclusion: Caste Organization and the Ancient City'. In *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, edited by D. Gellner and D. Quigley, pp. 298-327. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ramirez, Philippe. 2000*a*. *De la disparition des chefs. Une anthropologie politique népalaise*. Paris: Ed. du CNRS.

____ (ed). 2000*b*. *Resunga: The Mountain of the Horned Sage* (Bibliotheca Himalayica). Kathmandu: Himal Books.

Rauber, Hanna. 1980. 'The Humli-Khyampas of far western Nepal: A study in ethnogenesis'. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. 8:1, pp. 57-79.

Regmi, Dilli R. 1965. *Medieval Nepal* (4 vols., vols I-IV). Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhya.

Regmi, Mahesh Chandra. 1968. *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, vol. IV. *Religious and Charitable Land Endowments: Guthi Tenure*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies (Research Series, no. 12).

____. 1971. *A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846*. New Delhi: Manjusri Publishing House.

____. 1976. *Landownership in Nepal*. Berkeley: University of California.

____. 1978. *Land tenure and Taxation in Nepal* (4 vols.). Kathmandu: Ratna

Pustak Bhandhar.

Riccardi, Theodore. 1975. 'An Account of Nepal from the Vir Vinod of Shyamaldas'. *Kailash*. 3:3, pp. 199-286.

Rimal, H. 1983. 'The Rajopadyayas of Kantipur'. *Regmi Research Series*. 15:1, pp. 10-11.

Rosser, Colin. 1966. 'Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System'. In *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, edited by C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, pp. 68-139. Bombay: Asian Publishing House.

Roussiaud, Jacques. 1989. 'Le citadin'. In *L'homme mediéval*, s. dir. de J. Le Goff, pp. 159–200. Paris: Le Seuil.

Russel, R.V. 1916. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, 4 vols. London: Macmillan.

Sax, William. 1991. *Mountain Goddess: Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Segalen, Martine. 1975. *Les confréries dans la France contemporaine: Les charités*. Paris: Flammarion.

Shafer, Robert. 1967. *Introduction to Sino-Tibetan*, part 2. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Shakya, Anil A. 2000. 'Newar marriage and Kinship in Kathmandu, Nepal', PhD thesis submited to Department of Human Sciences, Brunel Univesity.

Shakya, B. (ed). 1996 (2053 BS). *Newā Bauddha Saṃskritī Guthi* (Guthis in Newar Buddhist Culture). Lalitpur: Lotus Research Institute.

Sharma, Bal Chandra. 1962 [2019 BS]. Nepāli Śabdakoś. Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy.

Sharma, Prayag Raj. 2004. *The State and Society in Nepal: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Trends*. Kathmandu: Himal Books.

Sharma, M. and Prasain, D. 2004. 'Gender Dimensions of the People's War: Some reflections on the Experience of Rural Women'. In *The Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, edited by M. Hutt, pp. 152-165. London: Hurst and Company.

Shneiderman, Sarah and Mark Turin. 2004. 'The Path to Jan Sarkar in Dolakha District: Towards an ethnography of the Maoist movement'. In *The Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal Maoist Rebellion*, edited by M. Hutt, pp. 79-111. London: Hurst and Company.

Shrestha, Bal Gopal. 2002. *The Ritual Composition of Sankhu. The Socio-religious Anthropology of a Newar Town in Nepal*. Leiden: Ridderprint (Koninklijke Bibliotheek).

Simha, T. 1984 (2041 BS). 'Pyānggaũ bhāsika', MA dissertation submitted to Tribhuvan University.

Singh, M. 1971. *L'Art de l'Himalaya*. Paris: Unesco.

Slusser, Mary. 1982. *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, 2

vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Skinner, D. and Holland, D. 1998. 'Contested Selves, Contested Femininities: Selves and Society in Process'. In *Selves in Time and Place. Identities, Experience, and History of Nepal*, edited by D. Skinner, A. Pach III, and D. Holland, pp. 87-110. Lanham/Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Snellgrove, David. 1959. 'The Notion of Divine Kingship in Tantric Buddhism'. *Studies in the History of Religions* (supplements to *Numen*), IV, pp. 204-218.

Srinivas, Mysore N. 1952. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

____ (ed). 1955. *India's Villages*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

____. (1960) 1972. *Social Change in Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Srinivas, Mysore N. 1975. 'The Indian Village: Myth and Reality'. In *Studies in Social Anthropology*, edited by J.H.M. Beattie and R.G. Lienhart, pp. 41-85. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Stevenson, S. 1920 (1971). *The Rites of the Twice-Born*. Delhi: Oriental Reprint Corporation.

Strickland, S.S. 1982. 'Beliefs, Pratcices and Legends: A Study in the Narrative Poetry of the Gurung of Nepal', PhD thesis submitted to University of Cambridge.

Tamang, Seira. 2000. 'Legalizing State Patriarchy in Nepal'. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. 5:1, pp. 127-156.

____. 2002. 'The Politics of developing Nepali women'. In *State of Nepal*, edited by K.M. Dixit and S. Ramachandaran, pp. 161-175. Kathmandu: Himal Books.

Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. 1976. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarabout, Gilles. 2001. 'Ancêtres et revenants. La construction sociale de la malemort en Inde'. In *De la Malemort en quelques pays d'Asie*, edited by B. Baptandier, pp. 165-199. Paris: Karthala.

Tawa-Lama, Stéphanie. 2001. 'The Hindu Goddess and Women's Political Representation in South Asia: Symbolic Resource of Feminine Mystique?'. *International Review of Sociology*. 11:1, pp. 5-20.

____. 2004. *Femmes et politique en Inde et au Népal: Image et presence*. Paris: Karthala.

Teilhet, J.H. 1978. 'The Tradition of the Nava Durga in Bhaktapur, Nepal'. *Kailash*. 4:2, pp. 81-98.

Thapar, Romila. 2004. *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*. Delhi: Viking.

Toffin, Gérard. 1975*a*. 'Les Néwar, un peuple à la recherche de son unité'. *Pluriel*. 3, pp. 29-39.

____. 1975*b*. 'Études sur les Néwar de la vallée de Kathmandou: *Guthi*, funérailles

et castes'. *L'Ethnographie*. 70, pp. 206-225.

____. 1975*c*. 'La terminologie de parenté néwar: Analyse descriptive et comparative'. *L'Homme*. 15:3-4, pp. 129-153.

____. 1976*a*. 'Le *sī kā bhway*, festin de la tête chez les Néwar'. *Kailash*. 4:4, pp. 329-338.

____. 1976*b*. 'La presse à huile néwar dans la vallée de Kathmandou; analyse technologique et socio-économique'. *Journal d'Agronomie tropicale et de Botanique appliquée*. 23:7-12, pp. 183-204.

____. 1977. *Pyangaon, une communauté de la vallée de Kathmandou: La vie matérielle*, Paris: Éd. du CNRS.

____. 1978. 'L'Indra jātrā à Pyangaon: essai sur une fête néwar de la vallée de Kathmandou'. *L'Ethnographie*. 76, pp. 109-137.

____. 1979. 'Les rites funéraires des hautes castes hindouistes néwar (Népal)'. In *Les Hommes et la mort; rituels funéraires à travers le monde, Etudes réunies* par, edited by J. Guiart, pp. 242-252. Paris: Le Sycomore / Objets et Mondes.

____. 1982*a*. 'La notion de ville dans une société asiatique traditionnelle: le cas de la vallée de Kathmandou'. *L'Homme*. 22:4, pp. 101-117.

____. 1982*b*. 'Analyse structurale d'une fête communale néwar: le *deś jātrā* de Panauti'. *L'Homme*. 22:3, pp. 57-89.

____. 1984. *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.

____. 1987. 'Dieux du sol et démons dans les religions himalayennes'. *Études rurales*, no. 107-108, pp. 85-106.

____. 1989. 'La voie des héros: Tantrisme et héritage védique chez les Bramanes Rājopādhyāya au Népal'. In *Prêtrise, pouvoirs et autorité en Himalaya* (Col. *Purushartha*, 12), edited by Véronique Bouillier and Gérard Toffin, pp. 19-40. Paris: École des hautes Études en Sciences Sociales,

____. 1990. 'Ancêtres claniques et esprits féminins dans l'Himalaya népalais'. *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*. 207:2, pp. 159-188.

____. 1992. 'The Indra jātrā of Kathmandu as a Royal Festival, Past and Present'. *Contributions to Nepalese studies*. 19, pp. 73-92.

____. 1993. *Le Palais et le Temple: La fonction royale dans l'ancienne vallée du Népal*. Paris: CNRS Editions.

____. 1996*a*. 'Tribal Brahmans? The case of the Rajopadhyaya of Nepal'. In *Change and Continuity: Studies in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley*,edited by S. Lienhard, pp. 85-104. Torino: Edizzioni dell'Orso.

____. 1996*b*. 'The Moiety System of the Newars'. In *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. 23:1, pp. 65-88.

____. 1996*c*. 'Histoire et anthropologie d'un culte royal népalais: Le Mvaḥni (Durgā Pūjā) dans l'ancien palais royal de Patan'. In *Célébrer le pouvoir. Dasaĩ, une fête royale au Népal*, sous la direction de Gisèle Krauskopff et

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, pp. 49-102, Paris: CNRS-Éditions and Éd. de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme,

____. 1996*d*. 'A Wild Goddess Cult in Nepal: The Navadurgā of Theco Village (Kathmandu Valley)'. In *Wild Goddesses in India and Nepal*, edited by A. Michaels, C. Vogelsanger and A. Wilke, pp. 217-51. Bern: Peter Lang (Studia religiosa Helvetica, 96).

____. 1997. 'Le dieu Bhyaldyaḥ et la fête des confréries funéraires chez les Pahari du Népal central'. In *Les habitants du toit du monde*, edited by Samten Karmay and Philippe Sagant, pp. 565-582. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie.

____. 1998. 'Le tambour et la ville. De l'ethnomusicologie à l'anthropologie urbaine (Népal)'. *L'Homme*. 146, pp. 113-142.

____. 2000. *Entre hindouisme et bouddhisme: La religion néwar, Népal*. Louvain-La-Neuve, Peeters, Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain (n°49).

____. 2002. 'Les Cités-Royaumes de la vallée du Népal, ca 1482-1769'. In *A Comparative Study of Six City-State Cultures*, edited by M.H. Hansen, Reitzels Forlag, pp. 107-123. Copenhagen: Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 27.

____. 2005. 'La forêt dans l'imaginaire religieux des populations de l'Himalaya népalais'. *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*. 222:2, pp. 177-207.

____. 2006. 'Construction et transformations d'un rituel urbain népalais: l'Indra jātrā de Katmandou'. In *Rituels hindous: Transferts et transformations*, sous dir. de G. Colas et G. Tarabout, (*Purushartha*, n°25), pp. 49-78.

Tucci, Guiseppe. 1974. *Théorie et pratique du mandala*. Paris: Fayard.

Turner, Ralph L. 1931. *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Underhill, M.M. 1921. *The Hindu religious year*. Calcutta: Association Press.

Vajracharya, Dhanvajra. 1987. 'The Development of Early and Medieval Settlements in the Kathmandu Valley'. In *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by Gutschow and A. Michaels, pp. 357-362. Sankt Augustin: V.G.H. Wissenschaftsverlag.

Vajracharya, Punya Ratna. 1971. (2025 BS). *Hāmro Cāḍ-parva*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Vajracharya, R.K. 1982. (2039 BS). *Items of Our Culture*. Kathmandu: Hiranarayan.

Van Kooij, K.R. (ed). 1972. *Worship of the Goddess according to the Kalikapurana*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Varenne, Jean (ed). 1975. *Célébration de la Grande Déesse*. Translation from Sanskrit *(Devī Mahātmya)*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Vergati, Anne. 1979. 'Une divinité lignagère des Newar: Digu-dyo'. *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*. 66, pp. 115-27.

Vergati, Anne. 1995. *Gods, Men and territory: Society and Culture in Kathmandu Valley*. Delhi: Manohar Publishers/Centre de Sciences Humaines.

Wegner, Gert M. 1986. *The Dhimaybaja of Bhaktapur*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Whelpton, John. 2005. *A History of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Widdess, R. 1997. 'Caryā: The Revival of a Tradition'. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*. 12:13, pp. 12-20.

Wiehler-Schneider, S. and Wiehler H. 1980. 'A Classification of the Traditional Musical Instruments of the Newars'. *Journal of the Nepal Research Center*. 4, pp. 67-132.

Vitebsky, Peter. 1993. *Dialogues with the Dead: The Discussion of Mortality among the Sora of Eastern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Witzel, Michael. 1976. 'Zur Geschichte der Rājopādhyāya von Bhaktapur'. *Folia Rara*, Franz Steiner Verlag, 65, pp. 159-79.

Wright, Daniel. 1972. *History of Nepal*. Translated from Nepali by Munshi Shew Shanker Singh and Pandit Shri Gunanand. Kathmandu: Nepal Antiquated Book Publishers.

Index

ācāḥ luyegu 45
ācāḥju 137, 138, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 170, 174, 184
adhikāra 336
ādivāsi 372
Āgama 324
āgā 59, 60, 63, 87
āgā chẽ 63
āgā phuki 59, 60
āgādyaḥ 26, 59, 60, 63, 64, 66, 137, 138, 175, 303, 327
ājā 260
aji 180, 210, 367
Ajimā 69, 102, 105, 107, 110, 114, 115, 116, 118, 210, 275, 293, 337, 367, 395, 396, 398
Āju 105, 201, 210
āju 260
āju bā 260
Ājudyaḥ 116
Ākāś Devī 233
Ākāśa Bhairava 107, 112
Akṣaya Tṛtīyā 34
ākhāḥ chẽ 85, 86, 87, 88, 93, 99, 114, 398
akṣetā 320
Alāsa Rāj 51
amalā 251
amali 251
Amātya 334
ānā 19, 130
Andhra Pradesh 210, 211
Ankhu Khola 389, 405
Annapūrṇa (Goddess) 102, 106, 107, 337
Arjuna 316
āru 251
āsana 330
Asā 98, 102, 106, 107, 114
Aśōk Vināyak 105
Assam 197
Aṣṭa Mātṛkā 196, 293, 319, 321, 322, 330, 334, 337
aṣṭamātṛkā pūjā 22
Asura 317, 321, 322, 324, 337
Avalokiteśvara 295
avatāra 49, 340
Ayodhya 328

bā 60, 88, 96, 198, 218, 260, 261, 268
bābā 261
bābā manā 261
Babcauri 142
Baḍhai 188
Bādikār (=Doṃ) 143, 169, 181
Bagmati 56, 70, 76, 89, 90, 107, 114, 130, 233, 245
bāhāḥ 14, 45, 77, 118, 292, 364
Bāhun 30, 66, 128, 130, 174, 215, 219, 225, 246, 251, 263, 271, 274, 284, 307, 353, 371, 388, 389, 392, 393
bāhunwād 370, 372
baide (or baidya, baidye 238, 248, 277
baigaḥ 168
bājā 83, 88, 373
baji 167, 238, 299
Bālā Caḥray 87, 113, 114
bala rakam 223
Balaju 215, 216, 218, 221, 222
balam bhway 334
bā-lā 218
bāli 178, 181, 182, 184, 185, 275
Baligaon 215, 229, 230, 234
Balimhā 59, 60, 62, 64
Bālkumārī 196, 197, 205, 206
Bālla 340
bāṃsuri 99, 100, 237, 402, 404
bāṃsuri khalaḥ 99, 100, 400
Ban Devī 234, 235
Ban Devī Mahālakṣmī 235
ban mārā 224
ban pā 256
band 160, 181
Banepa 5, 36, 50, 253, 328, 343
Bānre 52
Bānsbāri 109
bā phuki 60, 198
bār barsa 236
Bāra Kanyā 236
bārāy 174, 178, 183
bārāy tayegu 174, 178, 183
Bare 166, 167, 168, 186, 229, 330, 333
barkhā 128
Barmhū 66, 67, 166, 167, 173, 175, 229, 344
Barmhū Lawa 229
Basan 25, 245, 248
Basandol 25
bāscaḥray 138
Basigaon 222
baṭṭislakṣaṇa 79
bau biye 115
bau-pā 324
bay 99, 237, 402
bā tayegu (Tibetan) 69
bel 230, 327
Bengal 45, 54, 325, 327
besi 251
bet 252
Bhā 166
Bhadrakālī 39, 86, 87, 101, 102, 105, 108, 112
bhadralok 166
Bhagavatī (or Bhagvatī) 70
bhāgi yāygu (or bhāgiyāygu) 88
bhagwān yā thāy 126
bhailaḥ guthi 31, 35, 37
Bhailaḍyaḥ (or Bhairava) 25, 39, 85, 105, 123, 127, 130, 138, 155, 188, 197, 210, 272, 300, 326, 327, 328, 331, 335, 359, 369, 399, 400
bhājā 29, 32, 166
bhāju 29, 166
bhājupīṃ 368
bhākal pheygu 142
bhakhāri 39
bhākhi yegu 267
bhala yegu 268
Bhūlu (=Bulu) 13, 149, 151, 171, 176, 177, 199
Bhīma 317
Bhīmasena (or Bhīmsen) 128, 319, 334, 357
Bhūme 204, 256

bhāncā 261, 262
bhānja 262
bhānji 262
Bhaṭṭa 49, 56
Bhāradvaja 58, 62, 63
bhāri 252
bhau 261
Bhṛṅgāreśvar Mahādev 197
Bhimpedi 222, 223
Bhimsen 15, 25, 128, 134, 238, 252, 272, 286, 308, 319, 357
Bhimsenthān 89, 98, 187
bhincā 229
Bhindyaḥ (or Bhimsen) 25, 98, 105, 107, 111, 116
bhintunā 376, 402
bhomcā 261
Bhotāhiti 109
Bhote Kosi 134
Bhotiya 239, 273
bhūt 115, 126, 357
bhūt-pret 357
bhu 197, 323
bhu swāṃ 323
bhujā 65
bhulāunu 218
bhulnu 218
bhusyāḥ 83, 84, 85, 216, 237
Bhuvaneśvarī 324
bhuyuphasi 25
bhway 34, 42, 44, 46, 71, 86, 93, 94, 96, 126, 136, 142, 143, 202, 203, 218, 226, 227, 299, 302, 304, 305, 320, 333, 397
bhway bhāg 226
bicāḥ wanegu 33, 41, 59, 202, 298
bihā yegu 263
Bihar 223, 327
Bijeśvarī 233
Bijyāpu 106
Biratnagar 215
Birendra (King) 362, 370, 373
Bisālnagar 64, 109
Bisket Jātrā 22, 39, 44, 65
bũ 250, 252, 255
Bode 50
bodhisattva 25
Bũgadyaḥ 165, 199, 364
Bosigan 402
Brahmā 62, 80, 318, 319, 321
Bramhū 66, 106, 166
Bramhū *twāḥ* 106
brahmacārin 72
Brāhmaṇ, including Kumāī Brāhmaṇ 5, 7, 13, 15, 17, 26, 49 ff, 121, 134, 137, 154, 166, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 192, 213, 233, 247, 274, 287, 296, 305, 316, 317, 320, 321, 331 ff, 341, 342, 343, 344, 346, 347, 349, 350 ff, 362, 365, 369, 370 ff, 381, 382
brāhmaṇwād 372
Brahmāyaṇī (or Brahmāṇī) 196, 197, 205, 206, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 333
buṛhā (Nep.) 262
buṛu (Pahari) 261, 262
Buddha Jayanti 364
Buddhācārya 332
buddhamārgi 134, 305
Bungamati 12, 44, 165, 233, 402
burā 16, 25, 50, 92, 133, 209, 254, 396
burā jākwa 25, 50, 92, 133, 209
Buramḥū 274
burhā tayegu 72
Burma 121
busākhā 228, 230
busi (Pahari) 269
bwalā-jyā 130, 221
bwasa wanigu 90
Bwasi (or Bwasya) 94, 222, 365
bwalsi (Pahari) 253
byāḥ 60, 61
byāḥ wanegu 61
Byāṃcā Nakegu 183

cāḥ hilegu 126
cāḥdankā wanigu 323

caḥray 64, 93, 138, 305
caḥray pūjā 64, 138
Cait Dasaĩ 42
cakra 61, 64, 68
camā 228
Campi 130, 148
Cāmuṇḍā 324
Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇ 25, 50
Caṇḍā 325
Caṇḍī pāṭha 318, 320
Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa 34, 35
Caṇḍarūpā 324
Caṇḍavatī 324
Caṇḍogrā 324
cār-dām 264, 265
casari 181
catāmari chāygu 138
Cathāḥ 22
caturdaśī 305
caubisi 297
cautārā 53
Chamakallak 169
Chandragiri 215, 222
Chantel 243
Chapagaon 4, 50, 125, 128, 129, 130, 131, 143, 147, 149, 163, 164, 166, 173, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186, 206
Chasanda 301
Chatharīya 13, 53, 77, 172, 174, 176, 213, 331, 334, 343, 361, 379, 389, 390
chāy swāṃ (Flower) 322
chayapi nāyaḥ 42
Chelāmi 227
chemā pūjā 88
Chepang (ethnic group) 248, 273
Chetrī 30, 55, 58, 128, 130, 148, 149, 215, 218, 219, 225, 230, 246, 251, 263, 271, 274, 307, 362, 371, 388, 389, 392, 393
Chetrapāl 127
chewar 228
chigā (Pahari) 261, 262
Chipā 23, 57, 172
Chitlang 132, 133, 162, 215, 218, 219, 223, 229, 234, 237, 353
Chitwan 128, 223
chẽ 22, 58, 63, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91, 93, 99, 111, 112, 114, 125, 138, 201, 227, 228, 236, 237, 257, 265, 278, 299, 303, 305, 322, 392, 398
chẽ bau biyegu 22
chẽ chihigu 278
chẽ mumha 138
chẽ thakāri 138
chuīṃ 262
chwāli 32
chwāsa 112, 126, 180, 228, 348
Chwāsa Ajimā 112
Chwāsalubi 107
chwelā bhway 96
cibhāḥ 24, 44
cibhāḥ busādhā 44
cibi 252
cigwaḥ dhimay 85, 403
cikī sāḥ 303
cilaune (tree) 221
cilā 168
cipa 347, 348, 378, 393
cipa thikegu 347
ciri mā 229
citra 22
Citrakār 5, 6, 22 ff, 153, 166, 172, 225, 226, 235, 274, 289, 312, 315, 327, 366, 371
ciurā 167
cok 60, 61
cuke 58
Cun Devī 133, 233, 234
Cundyaḥ 15, 133, 233, 234, 236
cupi 128, 252
cwatī 168
cway 31, 196
Cyāmakhalak 169
Cyāme 169
cye-bā 260
cye-mā 260

daba 237
dabū (dabūli) 127, 237
dabali 277
dāi 260
daitya 22, 354
dāju 97, 237, 260, 261
dāju-bhāi 97, 237
dakaḷami 223
dakilā 174, 274, 343
Dakṣinkālī (Dakhinkali) 132, 229
dīkṣā 25, 53, 55, 57, 60, 63, 137, 204, 335, 396
dīkṣā mantra 53
dakṣiṇā 23, 62, 68, 79, 175, 275, 354
Dakṣiṇakolīgrāma 76
Damāī 130, 183, 266, 274, 276
dān 67, 354
Dang 148
Danuwar (or Danuwār) 15, 225, 246, 248, 273, 274, 276
daṇḍa 391
dīpa 32
Dīpaṇkara 22
dāphā 98, 99, 100, 237, 373, 400
dāphā guthi 98
darta yāyegu 72
dāryā (Pahari) 271
dasa lhāygu 89
Dasaī (New. Mwaḥni) 25, 39, 42, 50, 84, 87, 155, 161, 182, 183, 214, 222, 237, 254, 255, 256, 269, 284, 285, 293, 296, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 324, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 332, 333, 334, 336, 337, 337
Daśarā 317, 326
dathu 105, 106, 271
dāṃ pirā 264
Ḍāgū 187
Dāgol 365
deś 39, 42, 70, 136, 137, 143, 203, 204, 234, 306, 349, 378, 400
deś bhway 136, 143, 203
deś jātrā 137, 204, 235, 306, 349, 380, 400
deśanāḥ guthi 31, 41, 42, 43, 44
deślā guthi 31, 39, 40, 41, 45
degu pūjā 65, 227
dekhā 25, 60, 64, 137, 204
Desar 15, 225, 312, 377
dev pujā 96
Devī 25, 86, 87, 102, 133, 233, 234, 235, 277, 318, 319, 321, 324, 394
Deva 317, 327, 334, 336, 337
devī guthi 234
Devī Māhātmya 318, 319, 321, 324
Devbhāju 54, 55, 56
dewālī 65, 307
dewā 32, 34, 101
dey (or deś) 14
dhā 260
dhā-bā 260
Dhading 1, 215, 389, 405
Dhangū 187
dhar 59
dharma 53, 62, 102, 317, 337, 340, 352, 357, 394
dharma putra 62
dhāḥ 375, 402
Dhaulagiri (range) 243
Dhauwi 169
dhawā 64
dhawāchā pūjā 64
dhemāsa 82
Dhimal (ethnic group) 248
dhimay 81 ff, 105, 115, 154, 155, 156, 216, 237, 303, 373, 376, 399, 400, 402, 403
dhimay bājā 83, 88
dhimay khalaḥ 91
dhimay mākāḥ 91
dhimay pidanegu 88, 155, 156
dhimay senigu 87
dhīro 127
dhū khyā bājā 83
dho-bā 260
Dhobi 169
dhoti 68, 70

Dhulikhel 36, 50, 327
Dhum Vārāhī 64, 66
Dhumsing 223
dhunbā 229
Dhunt 169
dhunyā munyā 83
dhuri 269
dhwalak 182
ḍhiro 127
ḍhokā dune 108
ḍhokā pine 108
ḍholak 99, 181
ḍhuṅgri 225
didi aji 367
Didi Desi 235
didyaḥ (Pahari) 258, 259
digudyaḥ 12, 28, 29, 64, 65, 66, 96, 97, 133, 139, 174, 180, 198, 207, 209, 231, 258, 289, 292, 307, 310
digudyaḥ guthi 292, 307
Dikpāla 322
Diri Ijimā 275
Do Māju 65
ḍoko 251, 281
Dolakha 1, 134, 219, 377, 406
Doṃ (=Badikār) 143, 169, 170, 177, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186
drṣṭi kankegu 25
du byēkegu 343, 345
Dugā Bahī 99, 102, 106, 107
Dugu Malla 31
dukhā cwanegu 95
Duku 132
dukuli 277
dulā 265
dune 13
Dura 243
Durgā 25, 39, 40, 197, 237, 254, 256, 257
Durgā Pūjā 317
duru lākhā 268
dusi 250
dvija 70, 72
dwalāji 31
dwamā 229
dwāḥre 144, 145, 254, 255, 256, 333
Dwīṃ (=Putuwār) 150, 169, 347
Dwā (=Doṃ, Bādikār) 169
dyāhāṃ 128
dyaḥ bhāju 166
dyaḥ chē 111, 112, 236, 322
dyaḥ ikeimha 141
dyaḥ lhāykegu 126
dyaḥ pikaygu 235
dyaḥ pyākhā 226, 235, 236, 292
dyaḥ sālegu 88, 259
dyaḥ saray yāyegu 65
dyaḥ waikepīṃ (or dyaḥ waikipīṃ) 141, 358
Dyaḥlā 112, 169, 177, 183, 294, 333, 348
dyāṃ 128

gū 200, 271, 272, 273, 291
Gāi Jātrā 22
Gāma (or Gāmal, Gāmo) 131, 132, 133, 150, 229
Gāmal 218
Gāmo 131, 133, 304, 312, 377
gāṃ 229
gāṃjā 134
Gaṇa Kumārī 330
Gaṅgā 236
Gaṇeśa 12, 22, 25, 85, 110, 126, 159, 180, 196, 228, 230, 233, 236, 267, 303, 310, 319, 325, 330, 334, 381, 396
Gārgya 50, 62, 63
Garujujū 102
Gāthā 326, 337
Gathāmugaḥ 22, 87, 115, 126, 182, 197, 257, 302
gathāmugaḥcaḥray 138, 139
Gaḥchē 31
Gathu 11, 23, 161, 166, 172, 194, 225, 239, 312, 326, 327, 337, 398
gāū pañcāyat 256

gāyatri 334
Gāchidyaḥ 105
Ghale (ethnic group) 243
ghāṭ 92, 340, 354
ghaṭa 319
ghaṇṭā 346, 357
ghaṭasthāpanā 319
Ghaṇṭakarṇa 22
ghar juwaī 30
ghar śānti 344
ghāsā bhway 126
Ghāsi 187
Ghaḥkhū 188
ghau 92
Ghoḍā Jātrā 34
ghum 251
Girija Prasad Koirala 373, 386
gõ 254
Gõ 345
Gokarna 33, 345
Gokarṇa aūsī 234
gūkhā 253
golcan 322
golpau (Pahari) 251
gompa 204
Goḍhe Jātrā 113
Gorakhnāth 216, 233, 295
Gorkha 8, 216, 243, 250, 331, 361
gūsīpau 232, 272
gotra 50, 58, 62, 63, 228
goṣṭhi 45, 68
grāma 10, 76
gu 100, 102
Gubhāju 134, 166, 167, 172, 173, 174, 175, 332, 349, 350
Guhyeśvarī 89, 324
Gujarat 54
Gulmi-Arghakhanchi 6
Gūṃlā 25, 182, 183, 364
Gunakamadeva 76
Guṭhī Saṃsthān 39, 42, 185
Guni Punhī (or Gunhi Punhī) 70, 304
guru (or guruju) 45, 53, 55, 59, 63, 72, 87, 88, 93, 137, 141, 155, 166, 170, 175, 236, 237, 402, 403
gurujiko palṭan 216
Gurung 2, 209, 210, 242, 243, 249, 250, 274, 300, 350, 371, 379, 388, 389, 394, 401
guspi 272
guthi bhway 302, 304
guthi chẽ 125, 201, 299, 305
guthi sāḥ 302
guthiyār 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43,44, 45, 47, 68, 69, 84, 92, 101, 200, 202, 232, 234, 235, 294, 297, 298, 299, 302, 304
guṃgā 222
guṃkhā 222
Gwā 11, 150, 188, 213
gwahā 254
gwaḥjā 323
gwā 105
gwe lita chwayegu 30

hācāṃ gāykegu 89
hājā 113
hāku jyā kumhāḥ 188
hāku parsi 131
hāku patāsi 131
hala tayegu 275
Halchok 222, 226
hāmu 93, 181
Hanumān 59, 82, 83, 84, 89, 106, 107, 185, 257, 331, 399
Hanumān Ḍhokā 59, 89, 106, 107, 185, 331
Hanumante 70
Hārāhuru 169
Harasiddhi (village) 76, 197, 324
Hārītī 367
Harisiddhi (Goddess) 199, 204, 365
Harisimha Deva 327, 334, 335
Hatti Ban 245
Haugaḥ 26, 29
Hayu (ethnic group) 248, 273
hayṃ syāpīṃ 259

Hevajra 25
hi matwã dyaḥ 357
Hinara Ganedyaḥ 39
hiphwo swāṃ (flower) 322
Hiraṇyakaśipu 26, 49
Holī 337
homa 86, 286, 335, 343, 344
Hompudol 162, 215, 279
Hondu 215
huīṃ (Pahari) 262
Humla 239
hukā 168, 352, 390
Hundu 215, 227, 232
Hwāgaḥ 59, 65
hwāghã yāygu 115
hwākegu 30
hyāmu kumhāḥ 188

Icangu 50, 64, 65
ihi 16, 67, 86, 133, 230, 231, 269, 289
ijjat 97
iju 260
ijumā 260
ikegu 83
Indra 18, 22, 40, 59, 80, 81, 86, 95, 96, 108, 114, 116, 153, 174, 182, 183, 185, 226, 237, 288, 293, 302, 305, 316, 318, 329, 336
Indra Jātrā 18, 22, 40, 86, 95, 114, 153, 174, 182, 183, 185, 226, 237, 288, 293, 302, 305, 329, 336
Indrāyaṇī 69, 86, 87, 101, 233, 236, 325
Ini Bāhāḥ 106
Ipachē 59, 60, 63, 65
iṣṭadevatā 66
Itadi 245, 248
Itum Bāhāḥ 26

jā 32, 113, 166, 177, 230
jā nakegu 113, 230
jāgirdār 254
Jaisī 142, 225, 284, 354
jajmān 58, 165, 186, 333, 335, 336
jajmānī 165, 220, 274, 367
jāmā 235, 238
Jamaleśvara 109
jamarā 319, 320
jamarā rākhne 319
Jamo 102, 106, 107, 109, 114
Jamomi 109, 114
Janabāhāḥdyaḥ 114, 116
janai 60, 64, 70, 172, 217
Janai Pūrṇimā 70, 71, 72
janajāti 241, 244, 372, 379, 388
Jang Bahadur (Rana) 20, 73, 85, 106, 108, 163, 180, 222, 223, 255, 256, 313, 314, 355, 362, 385
janti 266
jaṅgali 131
Japatu 114
jāri-beṭhi 223
jāt 44, 46, 131, 166, 172, 177, 186, 224, 255, 273, 274, 293, 295, 332, 339, 370
jāt bhway 44, 46
jāt guthi 255
jāti pati 273
Jāṃgal Tane 188
jaṃgali 176
Jawalakhel 1
Jaya Prakash Malla 76
Jayasthiti Malla 132, 180, 339, 340, 350
Jayavāgeśvarī 324
jākwa 25, 50, 86, 92, 133, 209
jemān 165, 352
jeṭhi 261
jeṭho 260
Jeṣṭha 265
Jhā 49, 56
Jhaṅgeśvarī 324
jhina phuki 198
jhinu 95
Jhochen 301
jhyāli 99, 237
ji (Pahari) 261

jicā bhāju 29
jicā pāju 29
jilājā 29, 68
Jośī 174, 175, 334, 343, 344, 351, 353, 354, 357
Jogi (or Jugi) 169, 170, 177, 276, 331, 332, 348
Juddha Shumsher Rana 106
jugi bau 348
jwalu guthi 165
jwāī 271
jwanā kai 26
Jyā Bāhāḥ 106
jyākigu 130
jyūpīṃ 165, 166, 170
Jyāthā 105

kā pālegu 266
Kābujā 188
kacā 60
kaci 201
Kagatigaon 215, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236, 240
kāhā 345
Kāhāḥbhujā 187, 188
kāhāṃ (or kāhāḥ, kāhā) 187, 188, 345, 346, 347, 355, 356, 357, 367, 373
kāhilo 260
kaḥsi 123
kaḥti jā 32
Kaṅga Ajimā 105, 107
kaji 55, 85, 93, 237, 301, 310, 402
kāji 85
Kakani 215
Kālī 102, 112, 132
kāla bhāg 220
kalaś(ā) 25
kālarātri 328
Kāleśvar Mahādev 125, 126, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 143, 146, 148, 181, 182, 197, 306
Kālikā 324, 326
kaliyug 388
kālko 126, 138
Kāmī 177, 183, 184, 185, 220, 221, 274, 276
Kamalāchi Pilatū 98, 102, 107, 114
Kamalādi Ganedyaḥ 107
Kanauj 51, 57, 77, 353
kāncho 260
Kandpu 327
Kānphaṭā Yogī 181
Kantipur 76, 106
kaṭus (tree) 221
kanyādān 67
Kanyakubja 51, 353
kaū 261
Kāpālī 169, 181, 182, 348
kāpro (Pahari) 261
karī swigu 306
Kārāmjit 177, 332, 346
Karmācārya 13, 137, 143, 154, 174, 286, 294, 296, 321, 323, 330, 331 ff, 343, 344, 351, 353, 354, 357, 358
kārtik pyākhā 26, 49
Kārttikī 324, 326
Karuṇāmaya 165, 296, 364
Kasāī 169, 170, 180
Kasaju 334
Kāṭheśimbhū 86
kāṭṭo 347, 353, 354, 355, 356
kāṭṭo khna bhun 355
kāṭṭo nakegu 347, 354
Kataḥ 173, 332
kūtāḥ 32
Kāthā Kaumārī 323
Kau 166, 172, 183, 194, 366
Kaumārī 321, 322, 323
Kāṣṭhamaṇḍap 106
Kausik 58, 62
kawīta 236
kawaḥ 28, 29, 31, 58
kawā 58
kawāḥ 95, 96, 197, 198, 226, 236, 298, 305
Kāyaṣta 334
kāycā 261

kaytā 29, 110, 137, 160, 174, 178, 180, 181, 231, 259, 269, 349, 400
kaytā pūjā 29, 110, 137, 160, 174, 178, 180, 181, 231, 259, 269, 349, 400
kemi (Pahari) 250
kemicā (Pahari) 251
keukā 229
khā syāpīṃ 259
khāṅgi 255
Khaisimācok 63
khala 58, 400
khalak 58
khalaḥ 91, 93, 99, 100, 134, 197, 198, 400
Khaḍgī 41, 169, 170, 180, 275, 291, 296, 332, 348, 371
khappar 354
Khaptar Chetrī 218
Khas 8
khas kurā 361
khat jātrā 111, 161, 235
khaḥ 90
khaḥmū 366
khatrī 263
Khatrī Balāmi 218
khīṃ 84, 99, 237, 402
khīṃ guru 237
khaunā silegu 28
khāykegu 237
Khayṃ 125, 361
khayṃ bhāy 361
khayṃta 2
Khica Pokari 403
khir 355
Khokana 151, 164, 194, 197, 206
Khopasi 245, 248
khukuri 235, 252, 266
khulā 178, 274
Khusaḥ 150, 214, 250, 346, 351, 355, 357
Khware (or khwāre) 70
khwāḥ silegu 101
khyāk pyākhā 237
khyāḥ 235, 236
khyaḥpi nāyaḥ 39, 40, 41, 42, 44
kidu 310
kikampā 198, 238
kikimpā 238
Kilāghaḥ 102, 106, 107, 111
Kirāṭa 16, 83, 150
kirānā pasal 125
Kirtipur 1, 3, 7, 50, 55, 77, 92, 325, 346, 363, 371, 375, 402, 403
kisalī 35, 36, 88
kisān 365
kisi nay 253
kislī 88
kislī taygu 88
Kispidi 223
kodālo 220, 250
Kohiti 105, 106, 107, 111
Konāy twāḥ 98, 106
kone (or Kwaḥne) 105
Koṭeśvarī 324
kēpuī 83
kot 254, 321, 328
Kotkhu 245, 250, 251, 255, 257, 266
Kotwan 142
Kaṅga Ajimā 107
koṃcākhīṃ 84, 99
Kṛṣṇa 50, 233, 252, 313
Kṛṣṇa Mandir 50
Kṛṣṇa Praṇāmī 313
Kṣatriya 121, 316, 334, 336, 337, 352
kṣetra 14, 193
Kṣetrapāl 127, 196
Kṣetrapāla 126
Kubugaon 215
Kucikār 169
kul 58, 60, 61, 85, 228
kul chē 228
kuldevatā 64, 66
kuldyaḥ 136, 303
Kulekhani 215, 223
Kulu 169, 170, 180, 181, 182
Kumānanī 105

Kumārī 22, 79, 153, 207, 233, 235, 236, 293, 306, 319, 325, 329, 330, 334, 336, 337, 345, 376, 395, 396
Kumāra 289, 321
Kumārī Jātrā 329
kumārī sthāpanā pūjā 330
kumārī wāyegu 323
Kumāḥnanī 106
Kumbheśvar 50
Kumhal 248, 273
Kumhāl (or Kumhāḥ) 187, 188, 331, 332
kuṇḍalinī 61
Kusle 143, 169, 170, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186, 226, 232, 233, 266, 276, 331, 332, 348, 351, 356, 357, 378
Kusunda (ethnic group) 248
kwa jāt 177
Kwakhāmi 228
kwalāṃ 112
Kwalāṃdyaḥ 112
kwāṭha 321
kwaū 261, 262
kwasaḥ 231, 265, 391
kwase (Pahari) 271
Kwāḥ Bāhāḥ 102, 106, 107, 110, 156
kwaḥkāli 33, 297
kwaḥne 105, 106, 124, 302
kwaula 322
kway 196

Ladakh 210, 212, 309
lagan 267
Lagankhel 42
lākh 68, 130
lākhā 265, 268, 373
lākhā mari 373
Lakṣmī 25, 87, 324, 326, 337, 357
Lāl Darbār 109
lami 29, 231, 264, 266, 268
Lamjung 243
laḥ calay jyūpīṃ 165
laḥ calay majyūpīṃ 165
laḥ twankegu 33
lāḥjā 250
lasu guthi 165
latyā 274
lawa 229
lawaḥ 229
lāy guruju 45
Layku Sah 301, 302
lā suigu 347
Lele 131, 142, 148, 245, 248, 251, 276, 279, 305
Lele Bhanjyang 142
Lhuti Ajimā 69
Licchavi 8, 76, 83, 109, 291, 293, 300, 307
liṅga 235, 346, 347
lisā bhway 71
lithu 391
locā 278
Lokapāla 322
Lokeśvara 364
Lubhu 347
Luchumaru Ajimā 102
Lukumāḥdyaḥ 113
lusi dhenegu 172, 178
Luti 102, 105, 107, 113, 337
Luti maraḥ 113
lwāpu 144

mā 228, 229, 260
madhi 227
madi 250
Māgh 198, 232, 235, 258, 269, 272, 302, 304
Māgh Saṅkrānti 235, 304
Magrant 243
Mahabharat 214, 245, 252, 305
Mahabharat (range) 214, 252, 305
Mahāconī (goddess) 233
Mahādev (Mahādeva) 197, 274, 286, 305, 325, 330, 347
Mahādyaḥ 236, 305
Mahākālī 322, 331
Mahālakṣmī 216, 230, 233, 234,

235, 236, 237, 322, 325
Maharashtra 328
Maharjan 190, 194, 293, 298, 299, 302 ff, 344, 359, 363, 365, 366, 370 ff, 378, 380, 390 ff, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405
māhāṃ 256, 366
Mahānkāl 142
Mahāyāna 192
Māheśvarī 321, 322
Mahendra (king) 5
Mahiṣāsur (a) 318, 319
Mahiṣāsura-mardiṇī 319
māhīli 261
māhīlo 260
Maṅgaleśvarī 324
māiti 264, 265
majū 261
Majhi 248, 270, 273
majyūpīṃ 348
Makwanpur 215, 276, 377
maleju 229, 262
māmā 261, 268
māmā manā (pahari) 261
mana (pahari) 229
manā 229, 261, 262, 263
mānā 251, 252, 275
Mana Kāmanā 233
Mānandhar 23, 30, 43, 45, 46, 82, 100, 110, 172, 225, 274, 301, 332, 340, 345, 346, 347, 371, 403
māne 255, 256, 333
Māneśvarī 323, 331
maṭh 56
Manikhel 142
Manohara 70
mantra (or mantar) 237, 238, 239, 277, 320, 334, 343
maobadi 406
Maṇicur 52
maṇḍala 25, 79, 80, 207, 290, 310, 341
maraḥ 113
maraḥ jā nakegu 113
mari 227, 373
Markhu 215, 223
Maru (ṭol) 45, 82, 104, 107, 109, 111, 115
Maru Ganedyaḥ 107
masān 32, 92, 104, 107
māsinyā 273
Mātṛkā 13, 22, 25
mātā 168
māḥ tāḥnegu 90, 156, 157
mathyā patī 56
Matsyendranāth 1, 22, 25, 44, 86, 109, 114, 164, 188
māy keṃ 167
Māgaḥ Hiti 26
mākāḥ 91
mākāḥ chẽ 91
Mepu 94, 187
Meru (Mount) 80
Mhaipi Ajimā 107
mhyāy macā 28, 33
Miśra 56
miṭhāi 59
mitaimha 33, 41
Mithila 99
Mū 94, 110, 187, 188, 365
mū bāhā (bāṃ) lihigu 326
mū bhway 299
mū dhimay 86, 87
mū jātrā 204
mudrā 174
mukuṭa 71
Muluki Ain 169, 170, 172, 181
Munikār (=Mū) 188
Musum Bāhāḥ 82, 86, 89, 104, 107, 109, 111, 114
mwa 32, 88
mwaḥanī phaygu 88
mwaḥanī sinhaḥ 89
Mwaḥni 25, 39, 155, 182, 284, 293, 296, 302, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 337

Nāg Pañcamī 22
nāga 22, 26
Nagarkoṭi 229, 230, 250
nāge (Pahari) 255
naḥlā swanegu 25, 319
naḥlā swanegu thāy 25
nāike 210
Nakarmī 183
nakīṃ 174, 392, 396, 397
nakhatyā 29
Nakhu Khusi 124
Nakula 316
Nīl Vārāhī 107, 236
Nala 50
namāsinyā 273
nāṃ chwayegu 72
nani 58, 59
Nanyadeva (King) 51
Nāpit 177, 220, 333, 345
Narasiṃha 26, 49, 71
Narasiṃha Yātrā 71
Nārāyāṇa 67
Narsīṅgh Āju 107
Narsīṅghdyaḥ 108
Nāsal chok 89
nāsaḥ pūjā 82, 84
nāsaḥ pūjā guthi 82
Nāsaḥdyaḥ 5, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 91, 93, 98, 99, 110, 111, 116, 126, 156, 196, 197, 236, 237, 257, 303, 398, 399, 400, 402, 403
nāspāti 251
Nāsumanā 31
Naṭarāja 197, 398
Naṭarāja 84
Nātha 295
Nau 11, 131, 166, 167, 168, 177, 178, 194, 220, 225, 226, 275, 333, 345, 351, 366, 378
nauka 322
Nava Durgā 39, 40, 197, 319, 324, 325, 326, 327, 330, 334, 337, 338, 398
navamī 320
Nāy 11, 83, 169, 173, 180, 181, 182, 194, 292, 331, 333, 348, 351, 355, 357, 378, 398, 403
Nayar 393
nāyaḥ 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 114, 135, 255, 256, 257, 310
nāyaḥ luyegu 42, 44
Naycabumi 227
nāykhīṃ 115, 181, 285, 348, 357
Nāypāco 98, 104, 107, 109, 111
nepā bhāṣā 53
nepāḥ 250, 361, 382
nepāḥ bhāy (or Newāḥ bhāy) 361
Nepālmaṇḍala 290
Newāḥ (or Newāḥpīṃ) 1, 360
nhāylu (Pahari) 266
nhaynhūmā 182, 348
nhikā 26
nhindā (Pahari) 254
Nhu Sah 301
Nīlakaṇṭhī 324
Niśumbha 318
Nijāta 250
niji 310
nikhāra 64
Nikuncā Mahādyaḥ 164, 175, 305
nikur 64
nini 64, 155, 260
nitya pūjā 64, 235, 396
Nṛteśvara 84
Nṛtināth 197, 303
Nṛtyanātha 84
Nugaḥ 29
Nuwakot 1, 215, 219, 389
nwakū 94, 136
nyā lākegu 327
nyā lhwā 104
Nyata 104
Nyātāpol 40
Nyekhu 22
Nyeta 104, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 154, 155
Nyeta Ajimā 107, 112

Om Bāhāḥ 104, 107, 108, 109, 111
Orissa 210

pā 196, 221, 247, 252, 256
pā lākhāṃ 129
Paśupati 51, 56, 89, 307
Pañca Buddha 39
pañca paḥmā 324
pañca ratna 267
Pañcadān 40
Pacalī Bhairava 86, 87, 89, 90, 107, 111, 113
Pacalī Bhairava Jātrā 86, 113
pachimā 99
pīṛi (Pahari) 261
Paci *maraḥ* 113
Padmagiri (Chronicles) 76, 298, 324, 339
pīgā 111, 112, 235
Pāhāṁ Caḥray 86
pahāṛpīṃ 250
Pahari (Pahi) 4, 6, 14 ff, 132, 150, 164, 166, 207, 213, 214, 218, 219, 222, 225, 228, 234, 242, 244 ff, 262 ff, 379
Pāhāṃ Caḥray 113
Pahi 207, 242, 245
Pahigaon 248
pahikusā 251
paisā 35, 264, 267, 268
pūjā 29, 82, 84, 85, 88, 89, 110, 227, 230, 231, 233, 235, 238, 259, 269, 274, 289, 296, 307, 319, 321, 323, 330, 331, 336, 349, 396, 400
pūjārī 336
pāju 29, 260, 269
pākho 220, 223
palā 92
palā 27
Palung 215, 227
paṭa 25
Panauti 3, 5, 11, 16, 17, 245, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 289, 296, 312, 319, 320, 322, 323, 324, 327, 328, 330 ff, 338, 342, 349, 357, 361, 390
Panchayat Period 20
Panga 7, 371
Pāṇḍava 316, 321
Parbatiyā 2, 7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 30, 41, 195, 207, 212, 215, 218, 219, 220, 225, 229, 230, 233, 239, 240, 249, 250, 266, 271, 274, 276, 294, 296, 300, 301, 306, 307, 308, 320, 331, 351, 352, 353, 355, 356, 357, 361, 362, 363, 367, 369, 382, 388, 392, 393, 405, 406
Parbatiyā Pare 240, 245, 248
pariwār 97
Pariwār Niyojan 232, 404
parma 221
Pārvatī 236, 337, 357
pāsi 251
Pataliputra 80
patasi 405
patāḥ chāyegu 93
pāḥ biyegu 35
pāthī 40, 44, 128, 175, 179, 183, 184, 220, 238, 251, 252, 368
pāḥlā 71, 101, 112, 205, 273, 275
pātra 235
Pāṃ Caḥray 34
paubāhāḥ 25
pāyāḥ guthi 25
peta 79, 229, 267
peto 229
pewā 258
Phāgu Punhī 35, 182, 301, 304
phal piṇḍa 70
phalcā 125, 158, 183
pha-lha 309
Pharping (or Phanpi) 50, 132, 133, 215, 218, 222, 223, 224, 227, 229, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236, 237, 304, 375
Phasigāṃ 98
pha-spun (Tibetan) 309
pheri lāune 276
phohari 247
Phōtakā 29
phuki 28, 29, 33, 37, 47, 59, 60,

61, 62, 95, 96, 134, 198, 201, 227, 258, 298
phuki khalaḥ 134
Phulcok 214, 217, 219, 223, 226, 230, 231, 233, 235, 237, 240, 337, 359
phuli 225, 249, 265
phunucā 258
phurā (Pahari) 251
pī (Pahari) 261, 262
pi cuyegu 144, 299
pibi 229
pidanegu (pidanegu) 88, 89, 155, 156, 161, 398
pigā 206
Pilatū 98, 104, 114
pine 13, 108
piṇḍa 70, 174, 233, 287, 342
piranegu 88
pise 270
pitar 353, 354
pīṭh (or *pīṭha)* 196, 206, 209, 235, 236, 323, 331
pīṭha pūjā 323, 331
pitṛ 299, 336, 355
po hwalegu 344
Poḍe 169, 170, 177, 180, 182, 183, 253, 294, 331, 332, 348, 351, 357
Pore 169
Pracaṇḍā 324
Pradhānāṅga 334
Prajāpatī 287, 365
Prajāpatī 79, 82, 94, 100, 107, 109, 111, 154, 187
prasād 44, 142, 330, 403
Pratap Malla (King) 76
Pratap Singh Shah (King) 55
prāthamik pāṭhśālā 125
pravara 63
preta 47, 48, 299, 313, 335, 342, 353, 354, 355, 356
Prithvi Narayan Shah (King) 18, 54, 108, 216, 217
Prome 80
pu 90
pu cwanegu 90
pu hwalegu 344
Pūṃ 22, 166
Puñcalī 65
puchā pūjā 64
puilo 271, 283
pujārī 49, 53
pujāyāyipīṃ 137
Pukhudyī 301
pule gu 283
pulpul 126, 346
pulpul shay wāyegu 126
Pulpulu 346
pulu 32
pumi 27, 229
puī 205
puī pāḥlāḥ 205
purā (Pahari) 251
pura bū 252
Purāṇa 324, 239
Purbiyā (Brāhmaṇs) 49, 50
puro 68, 261, 262
purohit 49, 53, 55, 66, 68, 175, 344, 353
putra 62, 262
Putuwār 14, 15, 16, 18, 132, 150, 185, 213, 214, 218, 222, 225, 226, 233, 253, 268, 277, 332, 346, 347, 348, 351, 352, 355, 356, 357
puwā 127
Pwaḥ (Poḍe) 112, 169, 170
pwāgā 83, 85, 89, 99, 100, 237, 288, 346, 357
pyāṅg 128, 129, 177
pyākhā 26, 49, 145, 185, 226, 235, 236, 237, 293, 398
pyākhā guru 236, 237
Pyangaon 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 15, 21, 29, 36, 37, 75, 121 ff, 304, 311, 312, 343, 344, 345, 348, 349, 362, 365, 367, 375, 377, 391, 394, 402, 404
pyā 174, 342

pyã thayegu 174, 342
pyenhu bhway 96

Rañjitkār 5, 23, 30, 57, 366
Rai (ethnic group) 2, 149, 242, 250, 371, 379
Raj Gond (Indian ethnic group) 210
rāj guru 53
rāja 76
Rājaka 169
rāja-kula 14
Rājeśvarī 324
rājguru 216
Rājopādhyāya 5, 6, 13, 26, 49 ff, 137, 172, 173, 174, 233, 274, 287, 342, 353, 371, 389
rakam 223, 294, 332
rakami 294, 332
rakta cāṃdan 322
Raktadantikā 324, 326
rākṣasa 354
Rām Navamī 42, 301
Rāma 318, 327
Rāmāyaṇa 175, 381
Rangoon 80
Rani Ban 215, 221, 222
Rani Pokhari 2
rath jātrā 22
ratha 92
Ratna Malla (King) 76, 81
rāto māṭo 15
Rāto Matsyendranāth 1, 22, 164, 188, 199, 403
Rāvaṇa 318, 327
Raya Malla (King) 52
Ripumāri-Durgā 324
rodi 401
ropani 19, 129, 130, 251
rudrī pūjā 274
Rudracaṇḍā 324
rudrākṣa 278
Rudrāyāṇī 197
rudri 70

sā 22, 88, 220
sā pā 256
Sā Pāru 22, 100
Sīdyaḥ 201, 202, 207, 397
Sāghat 169
sahar 148
sāhilo 260
sāḥ 301, 302
Śākta 334, 335, 338
Śakti 394, 395, 396, 401
Śākya 12, 27, 30, 44, 52, 106, 110, 113, 118, 167, 185, 295, 330, 364, 366, 367, 382, 390, 395
salwar-kameez 405
saṃgha 364
śamī (Tree) 321, 337
samay 39, 257, 373
samdhi 261
samiti 371
sammelan 373
Sanagaon 215
sanal 210
saṅgh 371
sanāḥ gu 200, 232, 297, 304, 397
sanāḥ guthi 38, 41, 42, 43, 46, 68, 69, 70, 161, 397
sanāḥ wanigu 232
Sankaṭā 323
Sankhamul 345
Sankhu 3, 31, 36, 37, 50, 52, 77, 132, 134, 141, 292, 295, 307, 312, 347
Sāno Balāmi 133, 229
sapīṃ 170, 176
sapiṇḍa 343
saptāha 94, 343
Sāpu 94, 187
Sarasvatī 25, 233, 238, 337, 357
Sārkī 130
saruwā jāki 40, 155
sasaḥ tatā 30
sāsu 261
Sasudyaḥ 233
sattal 106, 290
Satungal 1, 13, 50, 146, 194, 222
sāu 220

Saugaḥ 29
sava 394
Sāymi 23, 166, 167, 168, 301, 333, 345, 346, 351, 355, 357
saṅginī 232, 404
Śāntipur 45
Śeśyaḥ 175, 333
Śeṣ Nārāyaṇ 233
Śikālī 206
Śiva (Śivadyaḥ) 316, 319, 321, 325, 326, 330, 334, 357, 394, 397, 398
Seto Bhairava 325, 326
Seto Darbār 109
Seto Matsyendranāth 25, 86, 109, 114
sī chāygu 222
Siddhilakṣmī 395
sī guthi 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 47, 48, 105, 200, 201, 202, 206, 297, 298, 299, 300, 311, 371, 374, 401
sī kāḥ bhway 142, 202, 227, 299, 304, 305, 320, 397
sīkaḥmi 223
sīlhu guthi 165
Sikharpa 245, 247, 248, 250, 251, 252, 253, 255, 257, 260, 263, 264, 268, 271, 276, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283
Silāmi 227, 228, 236
simāri sī (Tree) 221
Siṃhinī 325
snāna 297
sināj yākusā 251
Singh 365
sipha swāṃ (Flower) 326
sisnu 257
Sita Paila 215, 229
Sithi Nakhaḥ 227, 302, 304
Sokhel-Pikhel 215, 229
Sonaguthi 373
Sonāmi 227
Sora (Indian ethnic group) 210
sora śrāddha 343, 344
śrāddha 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 354, 355
Śrī Pañcamī 25, 34, 35, 133, 304
Śrīkṣetra 80
Śreṣṭha 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 22, 38, 49, 56, 57, 58, 66, 82, 97, 98, 110, 113, 129, 146, 149, 164, 166, 167, 168, 172, 175, 176, 185, 186, 194, 199, 230, 233, 263, 274, 295, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 343, 353, 361, 366, 367, 370, 372, 378, 379, 382, 383, 389, 391, 392, 403
stūpa 199
Śūdra 78, 337, 365
sūjhadyaḥ pūjā 138
Sūrya Bināyak 39
Suddhakār 333
Sunaguthi 194, 200, 201, 402
Sundarī Maī 323
Sundarī Mahālakṣmī 236, 237
Sunuwār (ethnic group) 225
suro 250
Surya Malla 340
Suwāl 321, 331, 333, 344, 365
Svacchanda Bhairava 233
Swabhā Bhagavatī 70
swāmī 52
Swaṭha 59
Swanti (=Tihār) 376
swāṃ bhinigu 142
swāṃ cukegu 86
swāṃta wanegu 71
Swayambhū 45, 86, 87, 89, 90, 94, 102, 105, 301
swosā 261
swosa bā 261
swosāpīṃ 261
swostā 261
syā phuki 227
syāno jāt 274
syāulā 272

Ta Bāhāḥ 296
tā cuegu 114

tā ligu 114
Tacapāl 31, 40
Tāgādhārī Chetrī 55
tāgādhāri 273
tagwaḥ 85, 86, 87, 218, 400, 403
tagwaḥ dhimay 400, 403
Tahā 134, 144
Tahachal 128, 368
Tahakhel 173
taichini 127
Takhāmi 228
Takhechemi 227, 236
tala 399
Taleju 11, 17, 25, 50, 51, 52, 53, 65, 71, 89, 106, 110, 187, 188, 207, 233, 294, 295, 296, 297, 303, 319, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 334, 336, 337, 338, 364, 395
Taleju Bhavanī 40
Taleju Jātrā 328
Tāmā Lawa 229
Tamang (ethnic group) 6, 15, 16, 130, 131, 132, 141, 142, 149, 150, 164, 209, 210, 212, 214, 219, 221, 222, 225, 239, 240, 243, 249, 250, 263, 274, 276, 301, 331, 333, 350, 371, 379, 384, 388, 389, 394, 401, 403, 406
Tanga (Goddess) 238
Tansen 1, 377
Tāntrika 335
Taṇḍukār (=Khusaḥ) 150, 214, 225, 346
tāpā phuki 28, 47, 60, 62, 227
tapuli 230
tapuli bāray yāygu 95
Tārā 25
Tarāni Ajimā 102
tari swāṃ (Flower) 142, 143
tarkāri 61, 179
tīrtha 345
taḥsī 369
Tau Lachi 302
tau phoji 323
Taukhel 130, 174, 183, 245
tauli 127
Taumāḍhī 31, 35, 39
tāy bhū 92
Teku 105
Tepay 144, 150, 151, 225, 377
Terhautyā 56
Teulā 213, 214
thā pūjā 64
thāhīlo 260
thakā chē 236
Thakūjuju 89
thakāli 16, 28, 32, 33, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45, 59, 60, 64, 70, 73, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 101, 126, 147, 149, 170, 174, 201, 203, 206, 209, 231, 258, 259, 271, 275, 298, 300, 302, 305, 374, 376, 380, 392
Thakali 242, 350, 389
thakāli nakīṃ 392
thakāri 135, 138
Thamel 98, 108
Thami 248
Thankot 50, 215, 223
thar 57, 227, 334
thāsā 27
Thasigaon 215
thaḥ chē 392
thaḥpīṃ 366
Thā Bahī 98, 102, 106, 107, 108, 109
Thāhiti 110, 156, 302
Theco 5, 11, 36, 75, 131, 149, 151, 161, 164, 171, 194, 205, 206, 288, 307, 324, 325, 326, 327, 362, 402
thekkā bihigu 255
Theravāda 20, 314, 382
thika wanigu 33, 41
Thimi 11, 12, 45, 187, 327
Thīlā Punhī 25, 133, 161, 202, 234, 305
Thosne Khola 142, 245

thwaṃ 300
thyākā macā 62
ti jyūpīṃ 170
ti majyūpīṃ 170
Tibet 1, 7, 9, 12, 25, 26, 27, 53, 75, 77, 115, 121, 131, 146, 149, 191, 192, 193, 207, 210, 239, 242, 243, 244, 245, 262, 273, 274, 277, 278, 297, 301, 310, 327, 350, 371, 388, 393, 401
Tibetan 9, 22, 25, 27, 75, 191, 239, 243, 244, 310, 328, 390
Tihār 25, 50, 114, 133, 214, 222, 238, 376
Tileswar 142
tilhari 225
Tirhut 51, 54, 56, 295, 327
tithi śrāddha 174
tī 251
ṭol 12, 22, 31, 35, 39, 58, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 90, 103, 104, 114, 235, 236, 254, 301, 371, 373, 374, 376
ṭopi 269
Tokā Bāhāḥ 105, 106, 107
Tokha 50
tripravara 63
Tripurasundarī 294, 323, 338
Tsucikā 29
Tsutsachē 59, 60, 63
tū 250
tukhā (Pahari) 253
Tukuca 108
tulā 181
Tulādhar 27, 30
tunā munā 239
Tusal 123, 128
twāḥ 12, 29, 31, 45, 58, 61, 79 ff, 154, 155, 156, 195, 271, 302, 303, 304, 371, 374, 403
twāḥ guthi 303, 371, 374
Tyauḍa 102, 106, 107, 109
Tyāgaḥ 106

ugra 337, 357
Ugracaṇḍā 324
Upādhyā (Upādhyāya) 53, 54, 55, 225
upākū wanegu 108
upākarma 70, 71, 72
upākaraṇa 72
upanayana 60, 72, 73, 335
Urāy 27, 30, 301
utis (Tree) 221

Vaiśya 76, 78, 186, 316, 337, 365
vaidya 32
Vaidyagrāma 76
Vaiṣṇavī 321, 322, 323
Vajrācārya 13, 23, 25, 26, 34, 35, 41, 44, 45, 52, 78, 95, 96, 106, 110, 113, 114, 118, 134, 172, 233, 259, 274, 301, 305, 333, 362, 364, 366, 371, 372, 382, 390, 395, 402
Vajravārāhī 143, 164
Vajreśvarī 324
Vana-Durgā 324
Vārāhī 64, 66, 105, 236, 322, 323, 325, 331
Varanasi 2, 50
varṇa 78, 337, 340, 365
Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala 79, 80
Vasundharā 25
Vatbaleśvarī 324
vaṃśāvalī 58
Veda 50, 63, 72, 335
vedārambha 72
Vetāla 25
vihāra 14, 77
Vijayā Daśamī 254, 256, 318, 321, 324
vijayā dhwaja 84
Vinaya 118
Vindhyavāsī-Durgā 324
Vishnumati 69, 70, 76, 89, 105, 107, 114
Viṣṇu 26, 49, 50, 68, 306, 316, 319, 321, 340, 357
Viṣṇudevī 325

vivāha 67
vratabandha 60, 65, 71, 72
Vyañjankār (=Tepay) 150
Vyaṅginī 325

wā hwalegu 344
wad 136
Walāchi 105, 107, 108
Wanglasimā 59
Watū 105, 106, 107, 112, 114
Watūmi 82, 97, 100
waḥlāḥ bhway 86
waḥlāḥ cwanegu 86, 87, 90, 93, 107, 110, 118
waḥlāḥ dhunkeku 86
Wāghaḥ 82, 97, 105, 106, 112
Wālā 50, 59
wī juigu 398
Wosikār (Pyangaon) 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 174
Wotāmi 228
Wotu 301, 371
Woṃde 105

yā 115, 126, 250
yī (Pahari) 261, 262
Yaṅgā 105, 107
Yalambara 210
Yama 47, 48, 354
yamaloka 354
yana byāṃ 60
Yaṭakhā 105, 106, 107
yantra 341
Yaḥmari Punhī 90, 232, 234, 304
yaḥsī 44, 302
Yaṃwā 188
Yengal 187
yogī 325
Yoginī 25
Yudhiṣṭhira 316
Yutu 106
Yutunanī 105, 107

ACC NO. 18045

305.85496
T571n

Gérard Toffin is Director of Research at National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, and teaches Nepali civilisation at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisation, Paris. He is an anthropologist with over 35 years of research on Nepal. Among his publications are *Société et religion chez les Newar du Népal* (Paris, 1984), *Le Palais et le Temple: la fonction royale dans l'ancienne vallée du Népal* (Paris, 1997), Ethnologie. La quête de l'Autre (Paris 2005), and the two edited volumes, *Man and his house in the Himalayas* (Delhi, 1991) and *Nepal, Past and Present* (Delhi, 1993). Prof Toffin delivered the Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture in Oxford, 2000, and the Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture in Kathmandu, 2005.

Gérard Toffin does not trudge a mono-track, one-village, one-caste study in presenting an ethnography of the Newar. This is a much fuller book, providing a broader and a more comprehensive account derived from shifting perspectives of themes, settlement locations, and such variables as their caste groups. A life-time of dedicated work is revealed in this scholarly presentation.

— Professor Prayag Raj Sharma

The Newar of the Kathmandu Valley form a highly complex society that cannot be reduced to an over-simplified and schematic presentation. Their caste system, comprising of more than 30 main hierarchical groupings, is one of the most sophisticated in South Asia. Besides the traditional high and low castes, it also includes a variety of castes of intermediate status and a number of Vajrayana Buddhist groups.

This book is the outcome of a long commitment between Gérard Toffin and this brilliant civilisation, extending from the early 1970s up to the present day. It is based on several first-hand case studies undertaken among a number of caste groups, living not only in the cities but also in rural areas. The themes that emerge include: kinship ties and the complex association of the *guthi* type; the duality between centre and periphery; the salience of territorial affiliation and social boundaries; the enactment of social ties in religious performances; and the construction of ethnic identity.

Some peripheral groups, such as the Balami and the Pahari, are analysed here for the first time. The pace of changes over the last four decades or so is also dealt with, with particular emphasis on gender issues and the emergence of new caste associations.

Newar Society provides a comprehensive understanding of one of the major ethnic groups of Nepal, and should be mandatory reading for anyone interested in learning about this fascinating society that shaped the cultural landscape of the Kathmandu Valley.

9 789993 343868

सोसल साइन्स बहाः
SOCIAL SCIENCE BAHA

Himal Books